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The RING

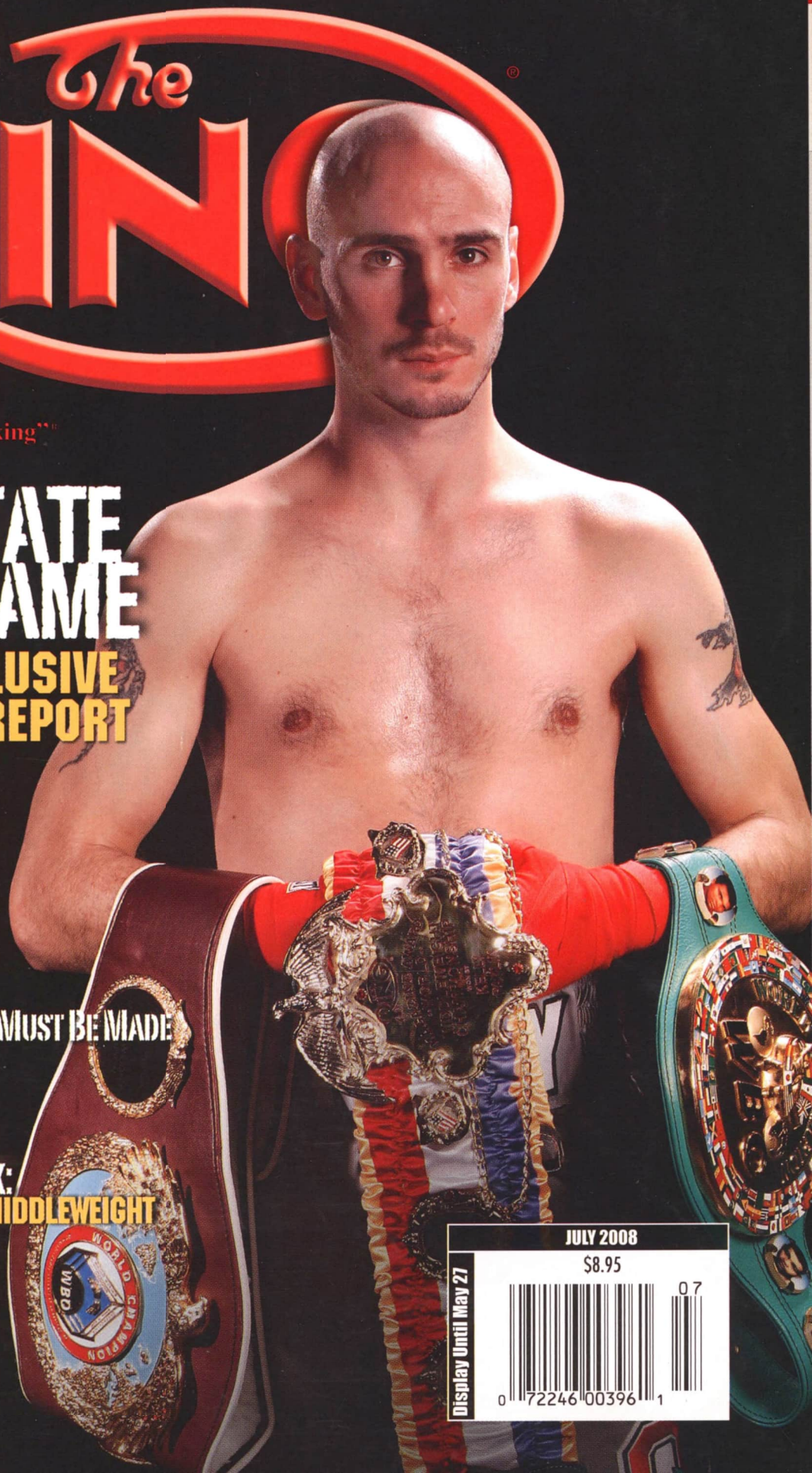
"The Bible Of Boxing"®

THE STATE OF THE GAME

OUR EXCLUSIVE ANNUAL REPORT

- BEST PUNCHER
- BEST BOXER
- OVERRATED
- UNDERRATED
- THE FIGHT THAT MUST BE MADE
- AND MORE

KELLY PAVLIK:
MUST-SEE MIDDLEWEIGHT



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Volume 87, No. 8 July 2008

The RING

Turning The Uptick Into A Trend

Some of the world's biggest financial institutions could learn a thing or two from the Sweet Science. While the mortgage meltdown has caused a crisis on Wall Street, Bash Boulevard has turned bullish by ignoring greedy scam artists in suits and providing a quality product at an affordable cost.

As March 2008 drew to a close and this issue went to press, the boxing renaissance that blossomed last year continued. True, the first three months of the year didn't produce a pay-per-view blockbuster, but that's because it's still early and neither Oscar De La Hoya nor Floyd Mayweather have fought so far. Nevertheless, signs of health abound, especially between the ropes, where a surprising number of potential Fight of the Year candidates have already taken place.

One of those fights, the riveting Manny Pacquiao-Juan Manuel Marquez rematch, also boded well for business, when approximately 400,000 households purchased the pay-per-view, generating $20.2-million in revenue. That's a PPV record for a match below the welterweight division, and the sellout crowd of 11,061 at the Mandalay Bay Events Center produced a live gate of $3.3-million, the highest yet for a Pacquiao fight.

Although Pacquiao-Marquez II was the biggest moneymaker among the exceptional fights we've already enjoyed in the early months of '08, from a purely entertainment standpoint it was overshadowed by two other tremendous battles.

Joel Casamayor's splendid seesaw struggle with Michael Katsidis not only exceeded all expectations, it shattered a lot of preconceived notions and hopefully convinced some that boxing is not a popularity contest.

Finally, words cannot adequately communicate what Israel Vazquez and Rafael Marquez did in their rubber match. Breathtaking in its savage intensity and Hollywood-like climax, their fight transcending boxing and spoke directly to the indomitable nature of the human spirit.

The British boxing boom also shows no sign of waning. David Haye and Enzo Maccarinelli attracted a capacity crowd of 20,000 to their fight in London, from which Haye emerged a potential superstar. And how about the Brits' enduring love affair with Ricky Hatton, who, coming off a knockout loss, has sold more than 50,000 tickets to his comeback fight.

It takes a lot of things coming together to create so many wonderful fights in such a short period of time, not the least of which is the fighters' willingness take such huge risks and perform so magnificently. But there is another common denominator running through these recent fights that I would be amiss to ignore: All of them involved fighters recognize by THE RING as world champions.

Coincidence? Maybe. But when Pacquiao's arm was raised in victory following his split-decision victory over Marquez, he became the 10th active fighter to hold a RING belt, which is the largest number of RING champions since we launched our Championship Policy in 2002. It took a long time to reach this point, but we did it the right way, which has resulted in a championship roster far superior to that of any alphabet organization.

Don't misunderstand me. I'm not suggesting THE RING is responsible for the sport's recent artistic and economic success. But perhaps the greater clarity and cohesion THE RING brings to championship boxing has played a beneficial role. Moreover, it is impossible to deny the simple fact that the best of boxing and RING championships are frequently one and the same.

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[Opening Shot]

Three Great Reasons To Retire

WBA light heavyweight titlist Danny Green was training in Sydney, Australia, 2,000 miles away from where his heart was, Perth, when he asked himself the question that all boxers eventually ask: What the heck am I doing? With enough money in the bank to last a lifetime and a career's worth of solid accomplishments, why continue to sacrifice the time he could be spending with his family and, more importantly, put his health at risk? "I am getting out on my terms, with my dignity and respect intact," the 35-year-old announced at a tearful press conference. "I have made the decision of an intelligent man, looking 25 years into the future." Green, who was scheduled to make his first title defense a month later, against Hugo Garay, leaves the sport with a record of 25-3 (22), and one only has to look at the accompanying photo of Danny, wife Nina, daughter Chloe Elizabeth, and newborn son Archie to fully understand why.

PHOTO BY MATT JELONEK/GETTY IMAGES

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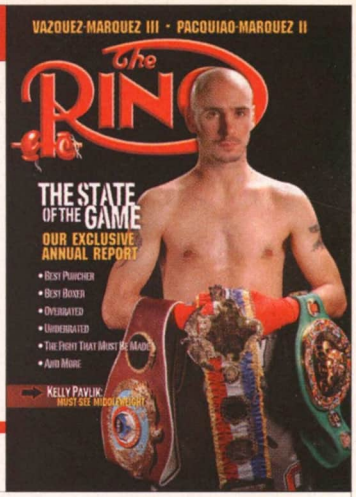

July 2008

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Cover Design: **Olivia Sheehan**

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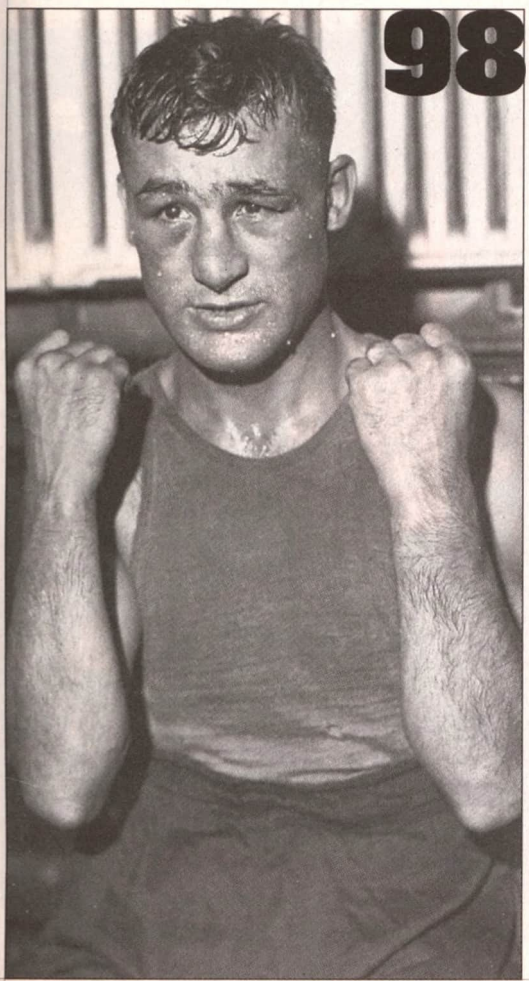

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Is Cov Glove The Right Fit?

It always seems to happen at the most inopportune times in a fight. There is brisk two-way action, neither fighter is giving an inch, the crowd's in full froth, excitedly anticipating what is to come when ... the referee steps in and interrupts the action because the tape on one of the fighter's gloves has come loose.

Dave Price Sr., a former fighter, thinks he has a remedy for that: Cov Glove, a small, almost weightless sleeve that fits over the tape and secures it.

It's already being tried out in Pennsylvania, under the watchful eye of Greg Sirb, the executive director of the Pennsylvania State Athletic Commission, and upon his approval, Cov Glove may be working its way across the country to much larger fight venues.

Getting Sirb to accept it was instrumental.

"I'm old school, so I usually don't like that kind of stuff. I was very hesitant at first to use it," Sirb said. "But Dave Price did everything I asked him to do. We tried Cov Glove last year and we ditched it real fast. It was all over the fighters' arms, sliding all over the place. It was too unstable. It was just to cover the tape and it just wasn't working. But the show we had in Philly on March 7 was the best results we've had, and hopefully it will catch on.

"I think a couple of different states use tape, but for me in Pennsylvania, it's a viable option. We haven't mandated anything yet. I want to get a feel for how consistent it is and I still would like to see a few more shows with the Cov Glove."

This is the third incarnation of Cov Glove. Price did some tinkering with the first two prototypes before finally settling on this current sleeve.

"Being a former fighter and avid boxing fan, I just noticed the tape would always unravel at a critical juncture of a fight," Price said. "It just came to me to make something that would stop that. The problem we had originally was finding the right size of elastic band to go around the gloves. We have it where we want it now."

Boxing fans got a close look at Cov Glove, March 28, on EPSN2's *Friday*

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Rogers Mtagwa and Aldo Valtierra slug it out wearing the Cov Glove

Night Fights, which featured Kassim Ouma taking on former *Contender* participant Cornelius "K9" Bundrage, in Salamanca, New York.

Keith Kizer, the executive director of the Nevada Athletic Commission, is even willing to look into Cov Glove.

"I think it's a great idea," Kizer said. "I'll have to call Greg Sirb and see how it works. The bottom line is we don't like when the tape comes off, and anything that deals with that issue would be a great one for us. We'll take a look and see how it works in Pennsylvania and we'll go from there."

—Joseph Santoliquito

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Cov Glove makers think they've found the right formula

W.C. Heinz 1915-2008

When *The New York Sun* folded in 1950, sports editors of other Gotham dailies beat a path to W.C. Heinz in hopes of getting him to continue on their pages the column writing that had already established Heinz as a paragon of American journalism. He declined. "I don't want to rewrite," he would later say in explaining his career choices. "I want to find new opponents." He turned to freelance writing, and a beneficiary of that decision was THE RING, which in the early-1950s published numerous engrossing Heinz pieces about fighters, trainers, and even ringside physician Vincent Nardiello.

Reminded of this years later, Heinz dismissed those old pieces as "gym workouts and nothing to be proud of" (although he fondly recalled the $50 apiece he received for them. "*The Sun* paid me $110 for five columns a week, or $22 a column," he told me. "The [New York] *Daily News*, then with the largest circulation in the country, tried to get me to do six columns a week for $200, or $33.33 a column. THE RING's $50 was most welcome").

Few writers were more critical of their own work, and with less reason, than the man who died on February 27, at age 93. By then the legend of W.C. Heinz had been gilded by his authorship of many widely anthologized articles and several outstanding novels and compilations. *The Professional*, published in 1958, is still considered by many the best novel about boxing ever written. (Years ago, it topped a list of great boxing novels I compiled for this magazine. That tickled Heinz as much those long-ago $50 checks. "At last," he said, "I finally made it into THE RING's ratings.")

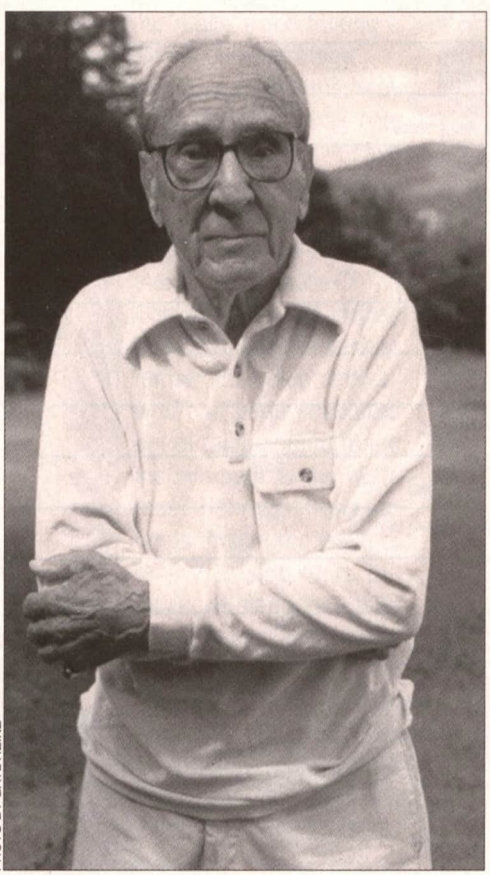


PHOTO BY GAYL HEINZ

Heinz in 2000

To him, boxing was an art form as expressive and complicated as the act of arranging words on paper. And as exasperating. "Once I hoped that when my time came to go I would die at ringside at a heavyweight championship fight," he wrote to me in 1994. "And now I can't even name the champion. Only part of that is due to the softening of my squash."

But nobody defended the sport better. "HBO has been pestering me about fixed fights and dishonest officials," a 1999 letter informed me. "I tell them that they'll run the last dishonest manager or official out of boxing on the same day that the last dishonest bank teller goes over the hill with the contents of the till. I said sure, Frankie Carbo went to prison. But so did a guy named Whitney who, at the time of the crash, was president of the New York Stock Exchange."

"Gym workout" or otherwise, Heinz' moves with a typewriter were as spellbinding as Sugar Ray Robinson skipping rope. Pound-for-pound, nobody did it better.

—Pete Ehrmann

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
2/15/08	Mike Alvarado W 10 Jesus Rodriguez *Rodriguez had no pop to stop advancing Alvarado*	Telefutura	jw	C	C	C
2/15/08	Ali Oubaali W 10 Ashley Theophane *Shouldn't aggressive Frenchman be an oxymoron?*	ESPN2	jw	C-	C	C+
2/16/08	Cristian Mijares W 12 Jose Navarro *Navarro has now lost title shots on three continents*	PPV	jb	A	A-	B-
2/16/08	Fernando Montiel KO 4 Martin Castillo *Reverse Barrera, Montiel is morphing into pleasing slugger*	PPV	jb	A	A	B+
2/16/08	Kelly Pavlik W 12 Jermain Taylor *Bodypunching paves way for championship round sweep*	PPV	sm	A+	A	B+
2/22/08	Enrique Ornelas KO 7 Norberto Bravo *Third tough fight for Ornelas in last six months*	Telefutura	sm	B-	C	B
2/22/08	Yuriorkis Gamboa KO 1 Johnnie Edwards *So this is what a young Cuban pro entering his prime looks like*	ESPN2	f	C+	C+	B-
2/22/08	Richard Gutierrez W 10 Jose Varela *ESPN2's first 50-50 matchup of 2008 delivers accordingly*	ESPN2	w	C+	B-	B-
2/23/08	Wladimir Klitschko W 12 Sultan Ibragimov *This looked more like a Russian version of patty cake than boxing*	HBO	h	A-	B+	D
2/29/08	Raul Martinez W 10 Benjamin Garcia *Thrown to the wolves, foes of Garcia are 147-14-3 since 2004*	Telefutura	fl	C	C-	C
2/29/08	Antwun Echols D 10 Michael Walker *Apparently, Echols still has some fight left in him*	ESPN2	sm	C+	C+	B-
2/29/08	Robert Guerrero KO 8 Jason Litzau *Amiable Guerrero turns bully against title fight neophyte*	Showtime	f	A-	B+	B
3/01/08	**Israel Vazquez W 12 Rafael Marquez** ***It doesn't get any better than this***	**Showtime**	**jf**	**A+**	**A+**	**A+**
3/07/08	Rogers Mtagwa W 10 Aldo Valtierra *Back-and-forth struggle could spawn a rubber match*	Telefutura	jl	C	C+	C+
3/07/08	Jason LeHoullier D 10 Jose Gonzalez *Judges rob Gonzalez of Jim Bagg's prestigious Stingray Award*	ESPN2	jm	C-	C+	C+
3/07/08	Cristobal Cruz W 12 Thomas Mashaba *Someone hit the fast forward button on both fighters*	ESPN2	f	B-	B	B
3/08/08	Nate Campbell W 12 Juan Diaz *How ironic, the "Baby Bull" is gored in a Cancun bullring*	HBO	l	A	A	A-
3/08/08	Samuel Peter KO 6 Oleg Maskaev *Great, now Nigeria has more heavyweight titlists than America*	HBO	h	A	A-	C+
3/08/08	**David Haye KO 2 Enzo Maccarinelli** ***Is Haye the English Holyfield?***	**Showtime**	**c**	**A**	**A**	**B**
3/13/08	Tye Fields KO 1 Roderick Willis *Pathetic on so many levels*	Versus	h	C	D	D-
3/14/08	Brandon Rios KO 2 Alvin Brown *Good-looking prospect dispatches usually durable foe*	Telefutura	jl	C	C	C+
3/14/08	Javier Jauregui W 12 Miguel Huerta *Connect ratio for powerpunches had to be near 75 percent*	Telefutura	l	C+	B	B
3/15/08	David Diaz W 10 Ramon Montano *ESPN2 headline level bout opens PPV card*	PPV	l	B	C	C+
3/15/08	Abner Mares KO 2 Diosdado Gabi *Win moves former Mexican Olympian into The Ring ratings*	PPV	b	B-	B-	C+
3/15/08	Steven Luevano W 12 Terdsak Jandaeng *Luevano passes important test by overcoming a knockdown*	PPV	f	A-	B+	B
3/15/08	**Manny Pacquiao W 12 Juan Manuel Marquez** ***24 rounds of action that beg for a trilogy!***	**PPV**	**jl**	**A+**	**A+**	**A**
3/21/08	Brian Vera KO 7 Andy Lee *Decision by referee has Irish eyes crying*	ESPN2	m	C	B-	B
3/22/08	Librado Andrade KO 8 Robert Stieglitz *Russian travels 6,000 miles to donate several pints of blood*	HBO	sm	B+	B	B
3/22/08	**Joel Casamayor KO 10 Michael Katsidis** ***A win-win situation: Casamayor wins fight; Katsidis wins fans***	**HBO**	**l**	**A**	**A**	**A**

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(Ring championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo

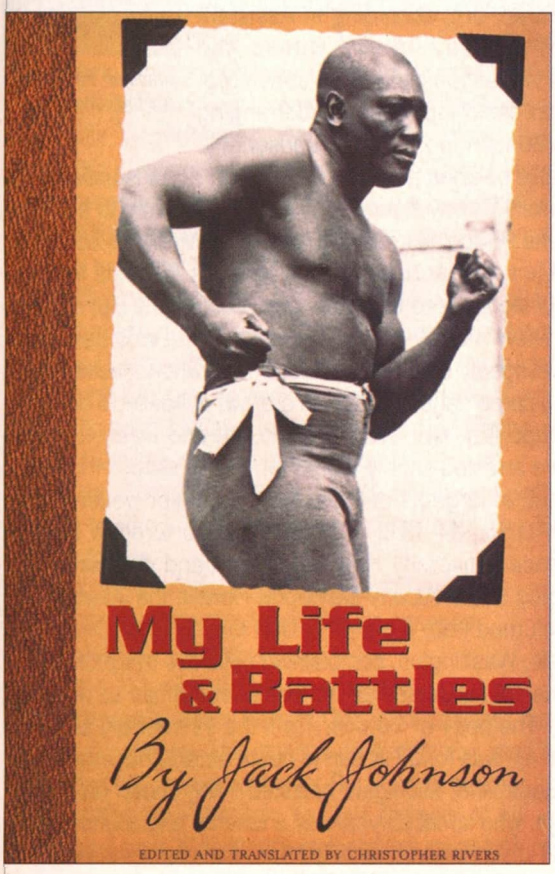
Boxing Bookshelf

Jack Johnson, the first anti-hero in American sports culture, was as polarizing a figure as Muhammad Ali years later, though for different reasons. Johnson was the first African-American to hold the world heavyweight title (1908-1915) and recently had his life chronicled in Geoffrey Ward's excellent bio *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise And Fall Of Jack Johnson*, which was also the basis for filmmaker Ken Burns' PBS documentary of the same name. Moreover, Johnson wrote an autobiography in 1927 called *Jack Johnson: In the Ring And Out*, with which some readers may already be familiar.

Now comes an addition to the Johnson bibliography, the short but interesting autobiography *My Life And Battles* ($25.95, Praeger Press, 127 pages), translated into English for the first time by Christopher Rivers, professor of French at Mount Holyoke College. The book is a compilation of a series of articles Johnson had serialized in the French sports magazine *La Vie Au Grand Air* in 1911, later combined into a book in 1914.

Johnson's tales in this slim volume are interesting, if not always accurate. The charismatic former champion was prone to hyperbole and not averse to embellishment. Nonetheless, these characteristics make for an amusing account of Johnson's life, from birth until his epic title defense against James J. Jeffries on July 4, 1910, in Reno, Nevada.

Such lines as "when he came out of the corner, I told him that I couldn't stand to see him such bad shape and that I was going to try to make his face look better" are perhaps only surpassed by what Johnson wrote regarding his tactics versus Fireman Jim Flynn. After claiming Flynn said, "You sure are a pretty nigger, Jack," Johnson wrote, "A hard straight right to his jaw put an abrupt end to the string of compliments." Indeed, Johnson may well have been the first star athlete to make trash talking a staple of his strategy.



It is a shame the book stops after the famous bout in Reno, as it would have been interesting to read Johnson's thoughts on the aftermath of his victory in that so-called "Battle Of The Century." Race riots erupted after Johnson dispatched former champion Jeffries, who had been pressured out of retirement to "bring the title back to the white race." Johnson, however, tends to skirt the issue of race, focusing more the business standpoint than social issues. But despite its brevity and truncated version of his life, *My Life And Battles* is still a worthwhile companion to *In The Ring And Out* and Ward's definitive biography.

—Mike Greenhill

DON'T MISS WILLIAM DETTLOFF

EVERY MONDAY ... EXCLUSIVELY ON: thering-online.com

Always insightful and often provocative, William Dettloff, The Ring's senior writer, is the thinking-fans' columnist, a writer who never settles for the same old stale commentary you've already read a dozen times. For example, here's Dettloff's take on a handful of hot topics:

The effects of steroids: If steroids compelled men to kill their families, the terrible sound of James Toney, married father of six, slinging deviled eggs down his throat would right now be echoing throughout his otherwise silent, corpse-strewn house.

Post-fight interviews: If you too were wondering why Vic Darchinyan made no real sense five minutes after getting pancaked, consider that five minutes before, he'd gotten pancaked. Why are people always surprised when a fighter who's just suffered a concussion says nonsensical things?

The white stuff: If you've never seen (Alexander) Povetkin, picture mayonnaise in short pants and gloves. This guy is so white he makes Sultan Ibragimov look like Wesley Snipes.

Dettloff on thering-online.com ... The perfect way to answer the week's opening bell!

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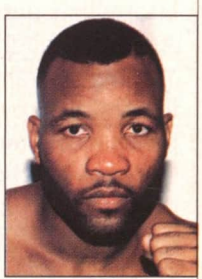
Outside the Ropes

Super middleweight champion **Joe Calzaghe** has come out in favor of returning boxing to the school curriculum in the U.K. "Regardless of whether you want to take it up as a profession or a sport, it's tremendous discipline for kids," said Calzaghe. "When I was a youngster, it was a tremendous outlet for aggression." Boxing was removed from the curriculum in 1962, but has proven successful in several pilot programs and also has the support of Sports Minister **Gerry Sutcliffe** ... IBF heavyweight titleholder **Wladimir Klitschko** donated $500,000 to The Laureus Sport For Good Foundation, which benefits at-risk children. One of the programs receiving Laureus' financial support is **Betances Boxing Program** in the Bronx, New York, which acts as a safe haven and provides children life skills, values workshops, and academic support, along with boxing skills ... WBA super middleweight titleholder **Anthony Mundine** donated $50,000 of his purse from his February match with **Nader Hamdan** to the Detoxification Unit at St. Vincent's Hospital in Sydney, Australia ... **Oscar De La Hoya** and business partner **Gabriel Brener**, chairman and CEO of Brener International Group, have entered into an agreement to acquire a significant ownership interest in the **Houston Dynamo** of Major League Soccer ... WBA light heavyweight titleholder **Danny Green**, 35, unexpectedly announced his retirement in late-March, following an Easter Sunday epiphany. "I woke up at 1 a.m. Sunday morning with my stomach churning," said Green, "and it was telling me to hang up my gloves. A lot of people will think I am crazy, but a lot of fighters stay in the game too long and that's not going to be me." Green, 25-3 (22), was training for an April 27 defense against **Hugo Garay** in Australia when he made the announcement ... Welterweight champion **Floyd Mayweather** has filed a lawsuit against his former promoter, **Bob Arum** of Top Rank, in Clark County (Nevada) District Court, claiming that Arum shortchanged him in matches against **Arturo Gatti** and **Zab Judah**. "There's no question we owe him some money," Arum told the New York *Daily News*. But he owes us a lot of money, and the people he's involved with owe us even more. We welcome this lawsuit. We wanted it to be filed. We have counterclaims and cross claims against certain other individuals involved with Mayweather. This is just the opening salvo in a major battle" ... Manager **Willie Savannah** has filed a protest with the WBA and WBO on behalf of **Juan Diaz** following his title-fight loss to **Nate Campbell** in Cancun, Mexico, on March 8. Savannah claims that neither Diaz nor Campbell, who won a 12-round split decision, were given pre- or postfight drug tests. Savannah is requesting the WBO and WBA declare the fight a no-contest and that Diaz be permitted to retain the two titles ... The Glasgow (Scotland) Sheriff Court ordered featherweight **Scott Harrison** was to carry out 200 hours in community service for his role in an alcohol-fueled pub disturbance in 2006. Harrison still faces trial in Spain on allegations of assault ... Former WBA middleweight and IBF light heavyweight titleholder **Reggie Johnson**, 41, has been indicted on second-degree felony charges of theft. The indictment alleges that Johnson received more than $120,00 in grant money distributed through the Urban League from the Red Cross to aid children displaced by Hurricanes Rita and Katrina. Johnson was supposed to put on a series of camps helping more than 40 children, but, according to Assistant District Attorney **Terese Buess**, the camps never took place. If convicted, Johnson could face a sentence ranging from probation to 20 years in prison. He could also be fined as much as $10,000 ... As is usually the case when **Manny Pacquiao** fights, crime came to a virtual halt in the Philippines during "Pac-Man's" March 15 bout with **Juan Manuel Marquez** in Las Vegas, as Filipinos from all walks of life focused their attention on the fight. But several hours afterward, 30-year-old **Adelino Pino** was beaten to death, allegedly by three of his brothers, when a celebratory drinking spree degenerated into a brawl at Adelino's home in Lapu-Lapu City. **Christopher Pino**, 31, and **Roberto Pino**, 28, were arrested shortly thereafter, but **Restituto Pino**, 21, remained at large as of press time ... Junior welterweight **Rafael Ortiz**, 14-14-2 (13), died at the Oregon Health & Science University Hospital in Portland on March 19. According to the *Albany Democrat Herald*, the 30-year-old Ortiz returned from a March 8 TKO loss to **Mike Lucero** in Ferndale, Washington, complaining of flu-like symptoms, but the cause of his death had not been established as of press time ... The body of **Vunies High**, the 92-year-old sister of **Joe Louis**, was found frozen to death outside her apartment at an Southfield, Michigan, assisted-living center on March 17. High, who spent 25 years as a teacher and counselor for Detroit Public Schools, suffered from Alzheimer's disease.

Green: Makes surprise announcement



Johnson: Facing felony indictment

Quotable

"I have to say Lennox—you're fantastic—but you're fired."

—Donald Trump, ending Lennox Lewis laidback stint on ***Celebrity Apprentice***

"I'm being paid four or five times more than what my previous highest purse earned me. That's a good incentive ... some fights are so brutal that you will never be the same again as a fighter. If it's going to be the last bout of your career, you might as well get paid well for it."

—British middleweight Gary Lockett, talking about his upcoming title bout with middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended March 24, 2008

Heavyweights: Oleg Maskaev (fourth last issue) falls to seven after kayo loss to second-ranked Sam Peter. Maskaev's demotion raises Nicolay Valuev from five to four. Alexander Povetkin (seventh last issue) jumps from seven to five, following sixth-ranked Sultan Ibragimov's loss to Wladimir Klitschko. John Ruiz replaces Alexander Dimitrenko at number 10 on the strength of Ruiz' one-sided decision over Jameel McCline.

Cruiserweights: Firat Arslan (sixth last issue) trades places with Enzo Maccarinelli (fifth last issue), following Maccarinelli's loss to champion David Haye. Rudolf Kraj replaces Matt Godfrey at number nine after beating Godfrey by decision.

Light Heavyweights: Danny Green retires and exits from the sixth spot. Green's departure moves up Roy Jones (seventh last issue) and Paul Briggs (eighth last issue) one slot each. Adrian Dianconu jumps from 10 to eight after Julio Gonzalez' (ninth last issue) loss to Reggie Johnson (now number nine). Unbeaten Chris Henry debuts at number 10.

Super Middleweights: Librado Andrade (fifth last issue) and Jeff Lacy (fourth last issue) switch positions after Andrade's TKO of Robert Stieglitz.

Middleweights: John Duddy (ninth last issue) slips to 10 due to a poor performance vs. Walid Smichet. David Lopez (10th last issue) moves to nine.

Junior Middleweights: No changes.

Welterweights: No changes.

Junior Welterweights: Andreas Kotelnik debuts at number three, thanks to his TKO of Gavin Rees, who falls from three to four. Kotelnik's entrance shoves down everybody rated fourth through 10th last issue one place each and pushes out Richard Torres (10th last issue).

Lightweights: Nate Campbell zooms from five to one after beating Juan Diaz, who tumbles from one to three. Campbell's advancement results in Jose Santa Cruz falling from three to four and Julio Diaz from four to five.

Junior Lightweights: Manny Pacquiao (first last issue) claimed the championship slot by decisioning Juan Manuel Marquez (second last issue), who becomes number one. Pacquiao's ascendancy also pulls up everybody ranked third through 10th last issue one spot each and makes room for Rocky Juarez to reenter at number 10.

Featherweights: Chris John (first last issue) and Robert Guerrero (second last issue) switch positions following Guerrero's win over Jason Litzau. Steven Luevano (sixth last issue) overtakes Naoki Matsuda (fifth last issue) following his win over Terdsak Jandaeng. Cristobal Cruz enters at 10 after upsetting Thomas Mashaba (ninth last issue). Mashaba exits, which allows Nicky Cook (10th last issue) to climb to nine.

Junior Featherweights: Kiko Martinez (ninth last issue) departs after losing to Rendall Munroe, who enters at 10. Rey Bautista (10th last issue) jumps to nine.

Bantamweights: No changes.

Junior Bantamweights: No changes.

Flyweights: No changes.

Junior Flyweights: No changes.

Strawweights: Roman Gonzalez (seventh last issue) departs to campaign at junior fly. This pushes up everybody rated below him last issue one rung each and makes room for Raul Garcia to enter at 10.

Pound-for-Pound: On the strength of his catchweight victory over Jermain Taylor, Kelly Pavlik replaces the inactive Winky Wright at nine.

The RING
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight
2. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
3. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Junior Lightweight
4. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
5. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Super Middleweight
6. **Israel Vazquez**
   Junior Featherweight
7. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
8. **Ricky Hatton**
   Junior Welterweight
9. **Kelly Pavlik**
   Middleweight
10. **Rafael Marquez**
    Junior Featherweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to
TheRing-online.com

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended March 24, 2008

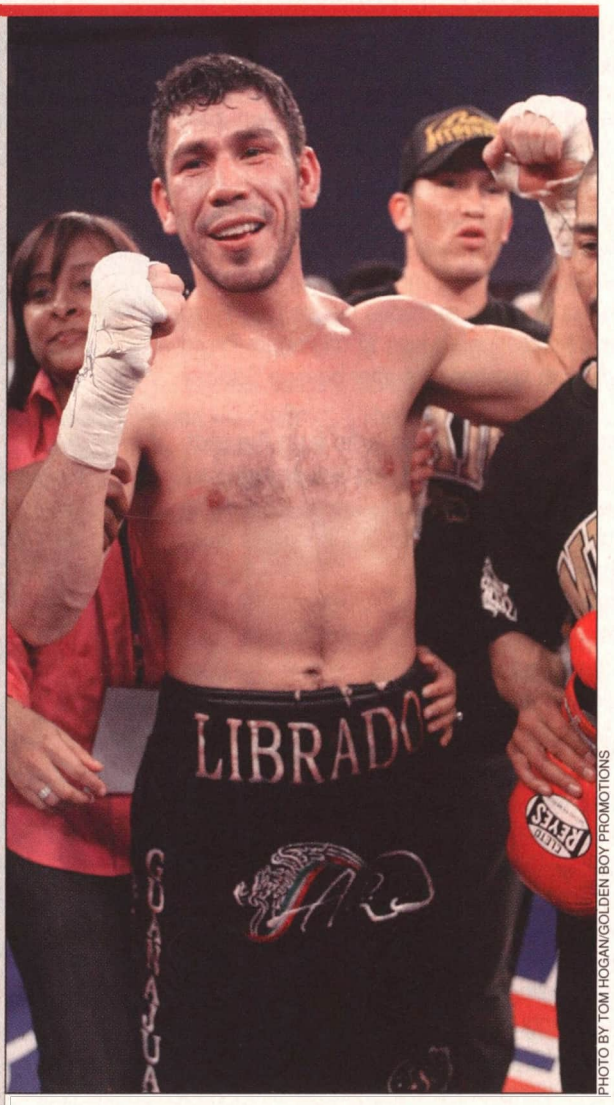


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Librado Andrade moves up to number four at super middleweight

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

The Ring Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of The Ring Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at thering-online.com

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 50-3 (44)
2. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 30-1 (23)
3. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 24-0-1 (17)
4. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 48-1 (34)
5. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN** Russia 15-0 (11)
6. **SULTAN IBRAGIMOV** Russia 22-1-1 (17)
7. **OLEG MASKAEV** Sacramento, CA 34-6 (26)
8. **VLADIMIR VIRCHIS** Ukraine 24-1 (20)
9. **TONY THOMPSON** Washington, D.C. 31-1 (19)
10. **JOHN RUIZ** Chelsea, MA 43-7-1 (29)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 36-4 (11)
2. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 40-2 (29)
3. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 38-5 (30)
4. **ALEX BUNEMA** Atlanta, GA 29-5-2 (15)
5. **JOACHIM ALCINE** Canada 30-0 (19)
6. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK** Germany 34-0 (22)
7. **TRAVIS SIMMS** Norwalk, CT 25-1 (19)
8. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 36-4-1 (23)
9. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 41-10-1 (21)
10. **SERGIO MARTINEZ** Spain 41-1-1 (21)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROBERT GUERRERO** Gilroy, CA 22-1-1 (15)
2. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 41-0-1 (22)
3. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 27-0-1 (19)
4. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 32-1-2 (23)
5. **STEVEN LUEVANO** La Puente, CA 35-1 (15)
6. **NAOKI MATSUDA** Japan 28-7-3 (11)
7. **JORGE LINARES** Venezuela 25-0 (16)
8. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 24-4-1 (12)
9. **NICKY COOK** England 28-1(16)
10. **CRISTOBAL CRUZ** Mexico 36-11-1 (23)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 43-4 (31)

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 37-5 (33)
2. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 28-2 (19)
3. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 34-1 (30)
4. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 26-0 (10)
5. **SOMSAK SITHCHATCHAWAL** Thailand 54-2-1 (43)
6. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 29-1 (17)
7. **TAKALANI NDLOVU** South Africa 28-4 (18)
8. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 31-1 (20)
9. **REY BAUTISTA** Philippines 24-1 (18)
10. **RENDALL MUNROE** England 14-1 (6)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 23-2 (7)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 59-3-2 (43)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 21-0-2 (7)
4. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 21-2 (17)
5. **GERRY PENALOSA** Philippines 52-6-2 (35)
6. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 36-6 (30)
7. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 31-1-2 (20)
8. **JOSEPH AGBEKO** Ghana 25-1 (22)
9. **ABNER MARES** Montebello, CA 16-0 (10)
10. **LUIS PEREZ** Nicaragua 25-2 (16)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: DAVID HAYE
England 21-1 (20)

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 21-1 (11)
2. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
France 33-4 (22)
3. **O'NEIL BELL**
Atlanta, GA 26-2-1 (24)
4. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 40-2 (30)
5. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 28-3-1 (18)
6. **ENZO MACCARINELLI**
Wales 28-2 (21)
7. **MARCO HUCK**
Germany 19-1 (13)
8. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 24-1-1 (17)
9. **RUDOLF KRAJ**
Germany 14-0 (10)
10. **JOHNATHON BANKS**
Detroit, MI 19-0 (14)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 48-4-1 (32)

1. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 28-0 (17)
2. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 41-3-1 (24)
3. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 26-4 (19)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 47-11-2 (32)
5. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 25-0 (17)
6. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 52-4 (38)
7. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 26-3 (18)
8. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Canada 24-0 (15
9. **REGGIE JOHNSON**
Houston, TX 44-7-1 (25)
10. **CHRIS HENRY**
Houston, TX 21-0 (17)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 44-0 (32)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 39-1 (29)
2. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 31-3 (23)
3. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Canada 22-0 (18)
4. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 27-1 (21)
5. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 23-1 (17)
6. **CARL FROCH**
England 22-0 (18)
7. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 26-1 (18)
8. **SAKIO BIKA**
Australia 25-3-2 (15)
9. **DENIS INKIN**
Germany 32-0 (24)
10. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
Little Rock, AR 27-2-1 (17)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: KELLY PAVLIK
Youngstown, OH 33-0 (29)

1. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 25-0 (20)
2. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 51-4-1 (25)
3. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 28-2-1 (12)
4. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 28-2 (13)
5. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 62-7 (42)
6. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 23-1 (16)
7. **RANDY GRIFFIN**
Louisville, KY 24-1-3 (12)
8. **RAYMOND JOVAL**
Netherlands 37-4 (16)
9. **DAVID LOPEZ**
Mexico 33-12 (21)
10. **JOHN DUDDY**
Ireland 24-0 (17)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 39-0 (25)

1. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 31-0 (25)
2. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 44-5 (37)
3. **CARLOS QUINTANA**
Puerto Rico 25-1 (19)
4. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 33-1 (24)
5. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 35-5 (25)
6. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 36-5 (25)
7. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 29-1 (27)
8. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 28-3 (13)
9. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Bronx, NY 33-2 (19)
10. **JACKSON BONSU**
Belgium 27-1 (23)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 43-1 (31)

1. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 36-1-2 (21)
2. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
Brooklyn, NY 24-1 (5)
3. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
Germany 29-2-1 (13)
4. **GAVIN REES**
Wales 27-1 (13)
5. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 28-3-1 (18)
6. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 36-2-1 (21)
7. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 46-9-1 (31)
8. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 37-4-1 (27)
9. **DEMETRIUS HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 28-0-1 (11)
10. **RICARDO TORRES**
Colombia, 32-1 (28)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JOEL CASAMAYOR
Miami, FL 36-3-1 (22)

1. **NATE CAMPBELL**
Jacksonville, FL 32-5-1 (25)
2. **DAVID DIAZ**
Chicago, IL 34-1-1 (17)
3. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 33-1 (17)
4. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
Mexico 25-3 (14)
5. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 34-4 (25))
6. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 23-1 (20)
7. **AMIR KHAN**
England 16-0 (12)
8. **YURI ROMANOV**
Belarus 20-2 (13)
9. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 29-2 (17)
10. **ANTHONY PETERSON**
Washington, DC 26-0 (19)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO
Philippines 46-3-2 (35)

1. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 48-4-1 (35)
2. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 28-0 (17)
3. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 23-0 (23)
4. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 43-6-2 (27)
5. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 47-3-1 (34)
6. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 26-1 (19)
7. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 50-3-1 (39)
8. **MZONKE FANA**
South Africa 27-3 (10)
9. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
South Africa 34-3-1 (18)
10. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 27-4 (19)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 36-2-1 (27)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 32-2 (27)
3. **CRISTIAN MIJARES**
Mexico 34-3-2 (14)
4. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 11-1 (7)
5. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 48-4-1 (37)
6. **DIMITRI KIRILOV**
Russia 29-3-1 (9)
7. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 26-4 (12)
8. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 33-3 (17)
9. **Z GORRES**
Philippines 27-2-2 (15)
10. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 29-1-1 (23)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NONITO DONAIRE**
San Leandro, CA 19-1 (12)
2. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 32-2-3 (20)
3. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 67-3-1 (35)
4. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 31-4-2 (15)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 26-0-2 (16)
6. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 24-2 (17)
7. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT**
Thailand 40-1-1 (16)
8. **JOSE LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 35-7-2 (29)
9. **KOKI KAMEDA**
Japan 17-0 (11)
10. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 26-4-1 (19)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON
Puerto Rico 30-0 (6)

1. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 26-1-2 (20)
2. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
Bell Gardens, CA 18-0-1 (14)
3. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 31-5 (16)
4. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 24-2-1 (10)
5. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 39-5-1 (30)
6. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 25-4-2 (14)
7. **OMAR SALADO**
Mexico 17-0-2 (9)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 23-2 (9)
9. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
Argentina 17-1 (8)
10. **JUANITO RUBILLAR**
Philippines 44--10-7 (21)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **YUTAKA NIDA**
Japan 23-1-3 (9)
2. **FLORANTE CONDES**
Philippines 22-3-1 (20)
3. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
Thailand 25-0 (9)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 18-2 (6)
5. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 61-6-5 (31)
6. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 19-3 (8)
7. **DONNIE NIETES**
Philippines 22-1-3 (13)
8. **OMAR SOTO**
Puerto Rico 13-1-1 (6)
9. **NKOSINATHI JOYI**
South Africa 17-0 (13)
10. **RAUL GARCIA**
Mexico 22-0-1 (15)

By Jeff Ryan

The Old Switcheroo

As we went to press, Floyd Mayweather, the best fighter in the world at any weight, was planning to wage war with 441-pound (the equivalent of exactly three welterweights) WWE star Paul "Big Show" Wight at WrestleMania XXIV in Orlando. If he could avoid being tied into a slipknot by Big Show's submission holds, or being splashed on the canvas like a beer logo should the seven-footer fall on him, "Pretty Boy" was expected to pocket a few more million he doesn't really need. Not bad.

A few writers and radio talk-show hosts were themselves wrestling with uneasiness over Mayweather's one-day career change. Apparently, they forgot the long and, *ahem*, glorious history of boxers and grappling. Let's see, there was Joe Louis shoulder-tossing villains like bags of flour. And Muhammad Ali getting picked up and spun like a propeller by Gorilla Monsoon, then trying to avoid the kicks of human crab Antonio Inoki. And, of course, Chuck Wepner being headbutted out of the Shea Stadium ring by Andre *The* Giant. (And you thought Evander Holyfield used his head effectively in the clinches.)

There's nothing wrong with a boxer crossing over to that other ring. The problem here is that it's the wrong boxer who's doing it. While watching paper champion Wladimir Klitschko play patty-cake with fellow paper champion

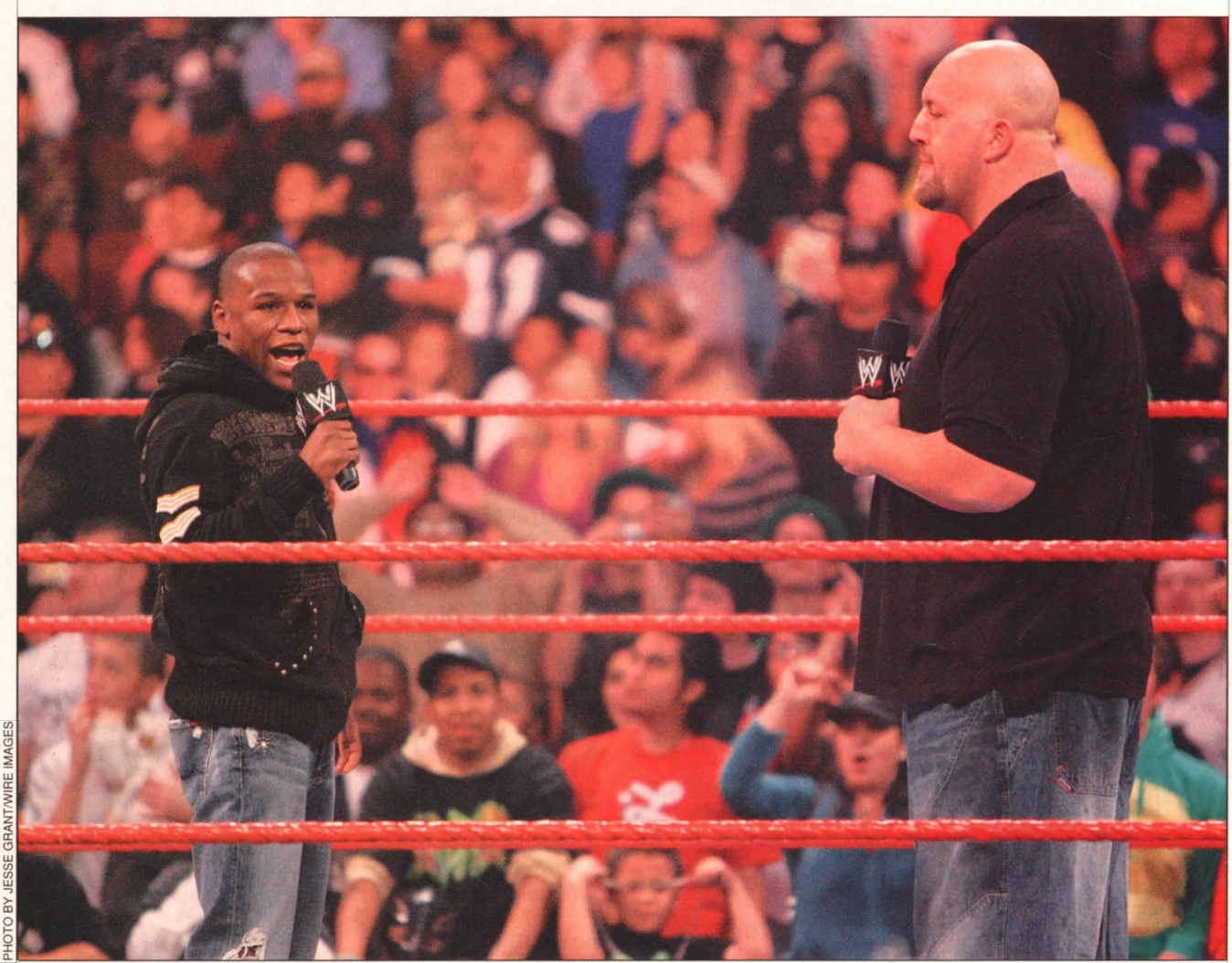
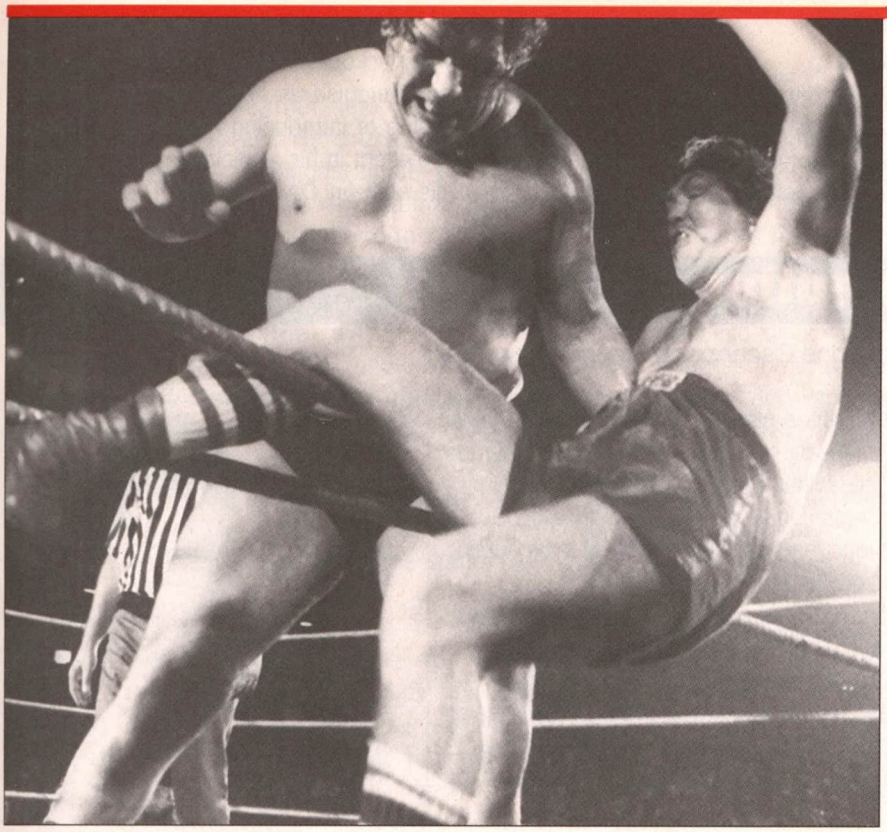


PHOTO BY JESSE GRANT/WIRE IMAGES

"Pretty Boy" confronts Big Show while hyping their WrestleMania XXIV match



Andre the Giant sends Wepner tumbling out of the ring in 1976

Sultan (No Sultan of Swat, that's for sure) Ibragimov and prove beyond a doubt that THE RING heavyweight title deserves to remain vacant, it dawned on me that Klitschko and Mayweather have things backwards. It's the Ukrainian who ought to be giving wrestling a try, and Pretty Boy who should be heavyweight champion.

The Ibragimov bout was Klitschko's last shot to prove himself to a lot of us, and he choked. It's always been tough to think of him as the king of the big men, primarily because of those three defeats and a chin that even failed him three times in one of his biggest wins, against Sam Peter. Now, Klitschko headlines at Madison Square Garden against an opponent who can't even get inside on him, and he's content to play it safe by piling up points with a jab as those fans that aren't sound asleep boo repeatedly. Is he kidding? Klitschko is 32 years old. Just when the hell does he plan to impress us? When he's 35?

With his size and background story, Klitschko would be a natural for wrestling, though he'd have to be taught a thing or two by Vince McMahon about knowing how to capture the moment. And he'd need a catchy nickname. My suggestion is "The Ukrainian Easter Egg." Have you ever seen one of those? It's pretty on the outside, but if you shake it, there's nothing

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Klitschko shows off his grappling skills

on the inside. Describes Klitschko perfectly.

Ah, if only Mayweather stood 6'6", as Klitschko does, and weighed 238 pounds. Being the "baddest man on the planet," as a great mind once described the job of heavyweight king, is as much about attitude and "getting it" as it is about bulk and a knockout punch. And Mayweather gets it. As annoying and thuggish as he can be, he obviously understands the value of introducing himself to crossover audiences. That's evident in his participation in those *24/7* series on HBO, his stint on *Dancing With The Stars*, and

Personal Perceptions:

The last word on everything from one Oscar presentation to another:

•Oscar De La Hoya announced that his three planned bouts for 2008, against Steve Forbes, Mayweather, and the immensely popular "opponent to be named later," will be the final three outings of "The Golden Boy's" illustrious career. What's good about the schedule is that Forbes represents the first actual tune-up De La Hoya has had since he beat Felix Sturm four years ago. It never hurts to be coming off an easy win when Mayweather is next on the dance card.

•Israel Vazquez has vaulted to the top of a lot of people's Favorite Fighters list, you can be sure of that. On my list, he's second only to Manny Pacquiao.

•The true absurdity of the alphabet ruling bodies was on display yet again when WBC heavyweight champ Oleg Maskaev defended against WBC *interim* heavyweight champ Peter in March. The ring announcer declared that the bout was to unify the WBC title. That's right, the WBC unifying *its own split crown*. Now even the fractions have been fractioned!

•Heck of an effort by Nate Campbell in upsetting Juan Diaz. Never underestimate a warrior who believes it's his last chance.

•Had to chuckle when reading those columns complaining that Mayweather was somehow soiling boxing's good name by participating in WrestleMania XXIV. Some of these opinions were offered the same week that we discovered former junior welterweight champ Saoul Mamby had just fought at the age of 60 and that Jeff Fenech and Samart Payakarun were talking about staging a rematch 21 years after their first meeting.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

It's easy to understand why Vazquez is one of Ryan's favorites

•Don't knock Mamby. Lots of senior citizens take part-time jobs in their later years in order to supplement their pensions or Social Security. And wouldn't you rather have Mamby fighting than messing up your order at a McDonald's drive-thru window?

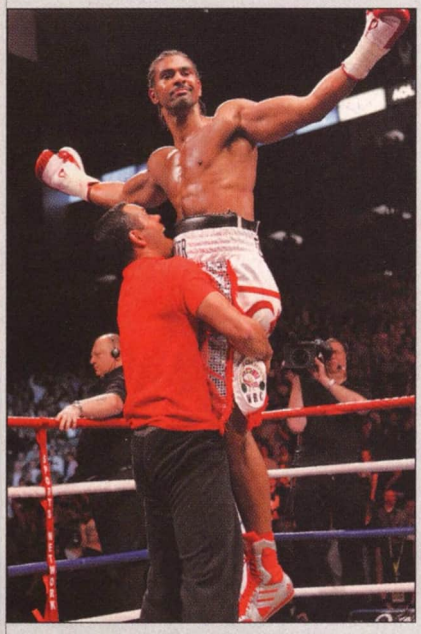


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Haye celebrates quick blowout of Maccarinelli

•The best part of a Fenech-Payakarun sequel will be when one of the broadcasters points out, with a straight face, that the Australian should have the momentum coming off of their last outing.

•No one should be shocked that the Garden, before backing off and lowering the prices, was initially charging $15,000 for front-row seats and $12,500 for second-row tickets to Roy Jones-Felix Trinidad. After all, one TV commercial went so far as to compare the matchup to Ali-Frazier I! What would ducats for Mayweather-Miguel Cotto or Bernard Hopkins-Joe Calzaghe go for at MSG?

•Lennox Lewis redefined the term "mild-mannered" during his stint on *The Celebrity Apprentice*. How he managed to avoid hitting a few of the more obnoxious fellow celebs is a complete mystery. Mike Tyson would be fun on a show like that, no?

•David Haye did fight fans a huge favor by bopping out Enzo Maccarinelli in two rounds. Had the Showtime bout not ended so quickly, it would have run into HBO's telecast of Diaz-Campbell and Peter-Maskaev. Boxing has a shortage of good cards, and when it features two on the same night, the powers-that-be schedule them for practically the same time. Dumb.

•Imagine my surprise to learn that a film called *The Diving Bell And The Butterfly* was in the running for an Academy Award recently. It got me thinking: Was a flick about O'Neil Bell throwing his computer fight with Muhammad Ali really worthy of that much praise?

the foray into wrestling.

In the ring, Mayweather acts the way we'd like a heavyweight ruler to act. He exudes confidence, saves his best outings for his biggest fights, dominates, stays on his feet, and leaves you wondering if maybe he's unbeatable. Sometimes you love to hate him. But he never leaves you thinking, as Klitschko does, that he's on top just because everyone else in his weight class is so mediocre. Mayweather wants to be the game's biggest name, something the heavyweight champion is supposed to desire. And he has created rivalries and grudge matches, something the heavyweight division sure could use.

A heavyweight title bout in front of 14,000 fans in New York? A boxer starring in WrestleMania? Big stages. Bright spotlights. Too bad the stars played the wrong roles.

Bloody Duddy's Future Is Muddy: The Sweet Science is a sport like no other. We were reminded of that yet again while watching blood pour out of middleweight John Duddy's sliced left eyebrow during his unexpected struggle against Walid Smichet at MSG in February. The cut cost Duddy, a winner by majority decision, a June shot at middleweight king Kelly Pavlik. But that wasn't the worst of it. More than likely, the ugly gash guarantees that Duddy will henceforth have an extra physical and psychological obstacle to overcome whenever he climbs into the ring.

Sports medicine has advanced to the point where Tommy John surgery can rebuild blown-out elbows, and the arthroscope has turned knee injuries that once forced retirement into minor setbacks that now merely force a guy to the sidelines for a few weeks. But there's still no effective way to repair or reinforce skin that has been lacerated, particularly the delicate skin above and around a fighter's eyes.

When a fighter suffers a cut as deep as Duddy's (a wound that would have caused a stoppage if not for the fact that Duddy was undefeated and a Garden drawing card), it's likely to reopen in another battle. If the cut doesn't reopen, the general trauma to the area (tight suturing and scar formation) increases the risk of a new cut in the immediate vicinity. And if the scar is raised or layers of stitching result in the formation of a small lump, that raised area can be irritated or busted open by even glancing blows.

Triple-crown former titlist Iran Barkley once had surgery to shave down the bones beneath his eyebrows, and while such a procedure might prevent cuts caused by bone pushing through the skin from behind, it does nothing to limit those gashes caused when leather slashes flesh or heads collide and skin simply splits from the impact.

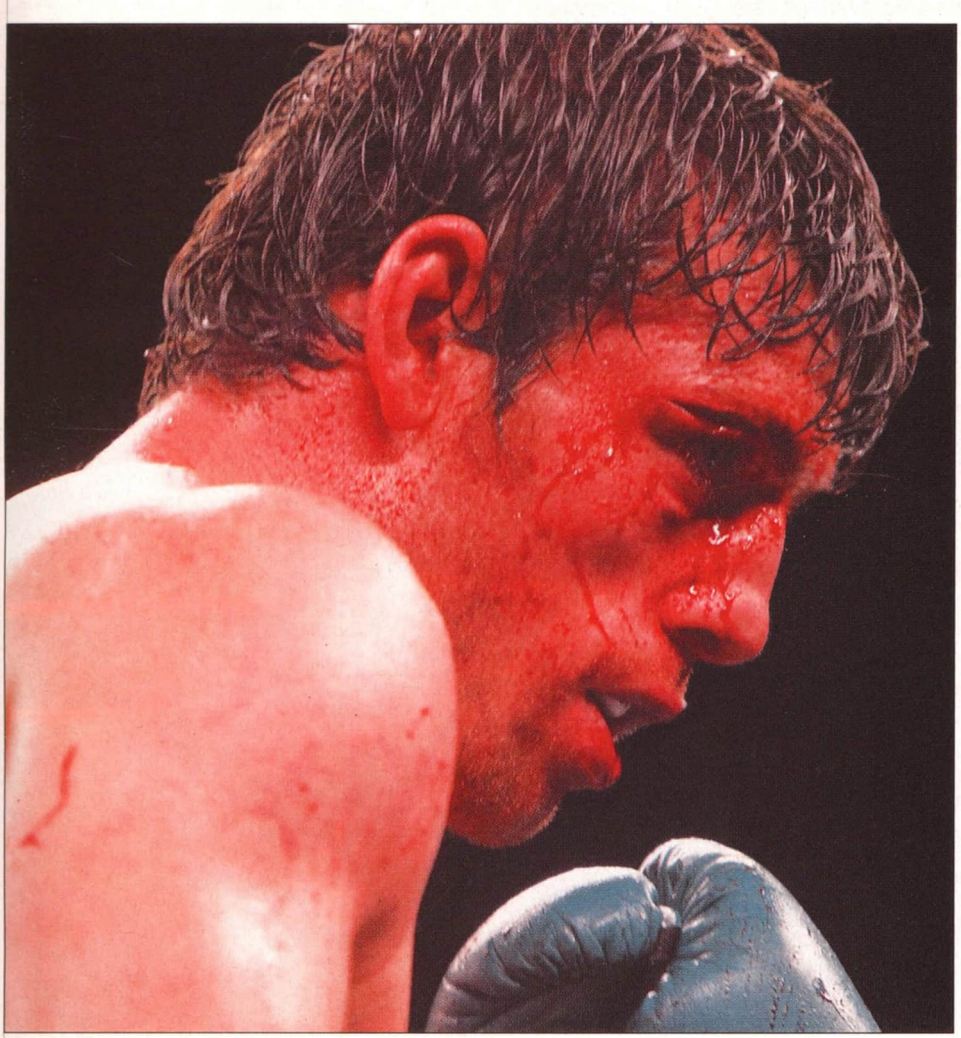


PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BOBGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Will cuts derail Duddy's career?

Duddy had plenty of problems before this. He was already cut-prone, and he showed against Smichet that he is about as adept at getting out of the way of a right hand as a statue is at getting out of the way of a pigeon dropping. The debacle with Smichet no doubt saved Duddy a serious pasting at the hands of the pulverizing Pavlik. But now, anyone who can hit Duddy above the left eye (which is just about everyone) suddenly becomes more of a risk to him.

It only takes one cut. Not a broken leg, a torn rotator cuff, or a ruptured Achilles tendon. Just one cut, if it's deep enough and in the wrong location, can jeopardize a fighter's future. It's not fair. Much in boxing isn't. ■

By Ivan Goldman

Boxing vs. Football: No Contest

RING colleague Bill Dettloff beat me to the punch in his thering-online.com column a while ago with 13 excellent reasons why boxing is better than football, but I decided to extend the list.

First, let's get past the commonly accepted absurdity that in order to be considered real men we must not only avoid eating quiche, but also waste interminable afternoons in front of the tube watching absurdly long football contests.

Not only does a football game take forever, it can seem like several forevers. Wedged deep within the 3½ hours of commercials and blather (if there's no overtime) are 12 to 15 minutes of action. So at most, only seven percent of that immense chunk of your day is spent watching actual play. Hoping to fool us into not noticing just how little athletic activity is dribbled out over the course of the beer commercials, each down is repeatedly put on instant replay, including the really crappy, inconsequential ones.

A boxing match, which can give us 36 minutes of action within 47 minutes, might sizzle at any moment of any round, and instant replay is used selectively, showing us only top-grade stuff. The Floyd Mayweather hook that caught outgunned Ricky Hatton. The brave Rafael Marquez reaching for the ropes so he won't sink to the canvas under the thunder of Israel Vazquez' assault. Now those are moments worth seeing again.

The NFL is a particularly distressing aspect of the football monolith because its team owners—a consortium of spoiled princelings and ruthless tycoons—routinely threaten to skip to another city dumb enough to bow to their tantrums.

Plenty of folks in St. Louis, Oakland, Indianapolis, and other municipalities that subsidize turncoat teams wish they'd prevented their local "public servants" from scrimping on education and public safety so they could shovel public revenues to fat-cat football owners. Meanwhile, 99.9 percent of the taxpayers who paid to build the skyboxes demanded by these owners don't have the money or the connections to get inside them. Sure, boxing promoters

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/IGHTWIRE IMAGES

A moment to remember: Marquez struggles to stay on his feet under Vazquez' onslaught

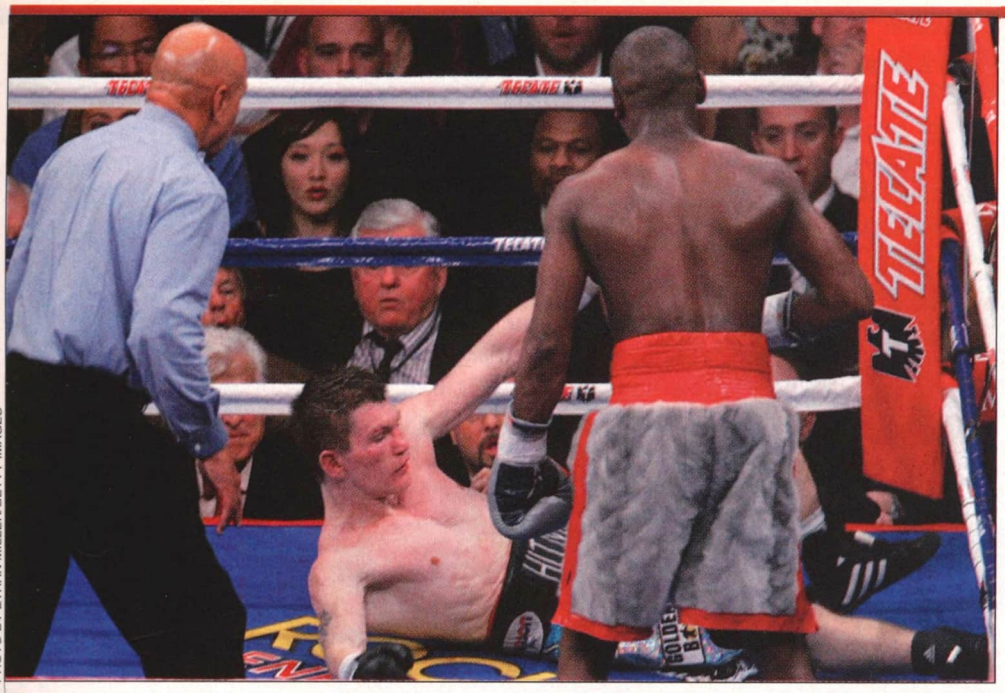


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Hatton feels the full effect of Mayweather's left hook

would grab public funds if they could. Heck, people will accept a bridge to nowhere if someone's lame enough to construct it for them. But because promoters can't rely on shared TV revenue or subsidized facilities, they have to scramble to put food on the table. And lately they've been scrambling in the direction of putting good fights together.

Artificial turf. In boxing, we know fighters might hit the deck, so they compete on a canvas that in terms of safety is light years ahead of football's thin pad covered by a phony green mat stretched over a concrete floor. Yet owners know some players will be violently slammed to the ground dozens of times during the course of a game. Statistics show players on artificial turf don't last as long as grass players. How dare owners load dice against the health of their athletes so they can show a prettier TV picture. There oughta be a law. But of course there won't be, because team owners also own plenty of lawmakers.

They say it ain't over till it's over, but in football, or any other sport with a time limit, it often is. When the score's 48-6 with five minutes left on the clock, what's there to watch? Of course teams play it out anyway for advertisers and those few zombies still glued to the box even as fans who were at the game are inching out of the parking lot. Baseball teams can pull it out in the ninth inning no matter what the score is and, as we know, a fighter can do them one better by ending it in any round. That's excitement.

Boxing analysts usually understand they're covering a sport. Most football announcers seem to think they're covering the fate of the universe. Teddy Atlas' repetitious pronouncements can be plenty taxing, but when he gets into his stance and demonstrates what to look for before a fight, he's compelling. When those ex-football coaches direct a camera to one of their electronic chalkboards, it's time for a snooze. Half the viewers have no idea what these guys are talking about, but admitting it would be more humbling than asking directions. Come to think of it, I don't ask directions either. You have to draw the gender line someplace.

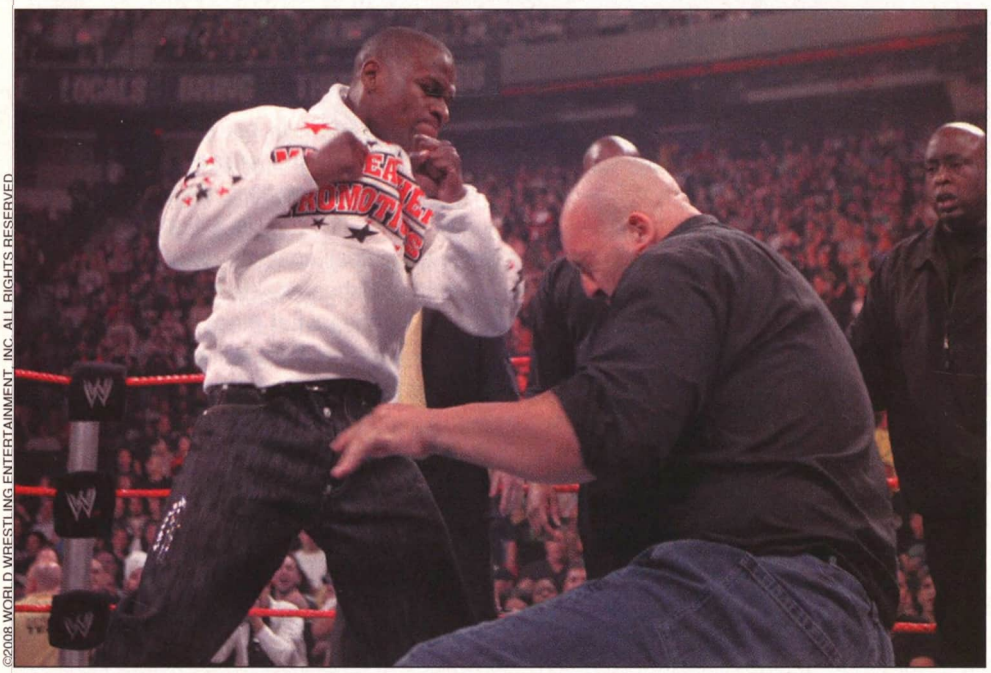
(To read Dettloff's original "13 Reasons Why Boxing Is Better Than Football," go to www.theringonline.com/ringpages/ringupdatearchive.html#boxing020408.)

PHOTO BY JOSH BARRON/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Stewart could not bring out the best in Taylor

Two Real Deals: What a pleasure it was to see Pavlik and Taylor enter the ring without flying carpets, fake swords, Roman helmets, swirling, smoke, stupid executioner outfits, or giant sombreros. Not even frilly fringe on their trunks. They both pursued the same scheme—train hard and come out ready to fight. What a concept.

The fact that Taylor, working with Ozell Nelson, was much better conditioned than last time doesn't speak particularly well of Emanuel Steward, who was chief trainer when Taylor ran out of gas midway through their first 12-rounder. Like most fighters, Taylor needs someone he trusts pushing him to the absolute limit in the gym and then to make him go another round. Steward evidently couldn't fill that role.



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Goldman is not happy about Mayweather's WWE adventure

Red Tape Madness: Boxing Writers Association of America Vice President Tom Hauser, who demanded prospective member and RING columnist Jeff Ryan fill out a questionnaire and send him six samples of his work apparently thinks the BWAA is a branch of the Bulgarian Department of Motor Vehicles. James Jones captured this witless mindset in *From Here To Eternity* when a memorable clerk refused ammo to soldiers under attack at Pearl Harbor because he didn't have a properly signed order.

Quote Of The Month: "The fights we've had with Don before the fights [in the ring] were worse than the actual fights."—Willie Savannah, manager of Juan Diaz as Team Diaz parted company with promoter Don King.

Pound-For-Pound Jackass: Somebody should explain to Mayweather that a fighter resorts to professional wrestling only when he's facing eviction from his fourth-floor walk-up above the pawnshop, not while he's a champion at the top of his career. Doesn't this guy see any old movies? He built publicity for the fake spectacle by tossing c-notes to L.A. wrestling fans and then watching them scramble for them—all about as humorous as needling a kid in a wheelchair. Catch him, Oscar. Right hand, left hook. It's there for you.

Magoos: Ever hear the name Sergio Caiz? Last name sounds familiar, right. Sergio's father and brother, Raul Sr. and Jr., get most of the big-time referee assignments in the state of California. It was younger brother Sergio who was assigned to be one of the three judges for the WBA fight between bantam beltholder Wladimir Sdorenko and Nobuto Ikehara in Japan. Now Caiz is a licensed judge and he seemed to get the scoring right (he scored for Sdorenko 118-110, while the other judges had it 119-110 and 116-112), but there is a slight problem: Caiz was assigned to judge the title fight even though an investigation by cbssports.com revealed that he had never even judged a four-rounder before.

While this is yet another shameful act by the Venezuela-based WBA, I have to give them a little credit for not hiding from it. A letter faxed to me by Executive Director Gilberto Jesus Mendoza read in part: "The reason why we considered Sergio Caiz' case to be special is partly due to the ever-present influence of his father, Raul, and his older brother, Raul Jr., who are closely involved in his development. Furthermore, Sergio has attended the WBA conventions and has received the seal of approval from the ABC [Association of Boxing Commissioners] for his judging competence ... We readily admit that it was a bold move on our part."

I need add nothing.

Tarnishing one of the greatest fights of the last couple of decades, promoter Gary Shaw and cornerman Jaime Quintana complained in chorus that referee Pat Russell should have "let them fight" when he correctly called a knockdown for Vazquez in the 12th round of his tiebreaker with the helpless Marquez being held up by the ropes. If Russell hadn't stepped in, Marquez might be breathing through a machine now.

Question for Quintana and trainer-manager Nacho Beristain. Where were the towels and the Enswell?

For its prefight publicity of Marquez-Vazquez III,

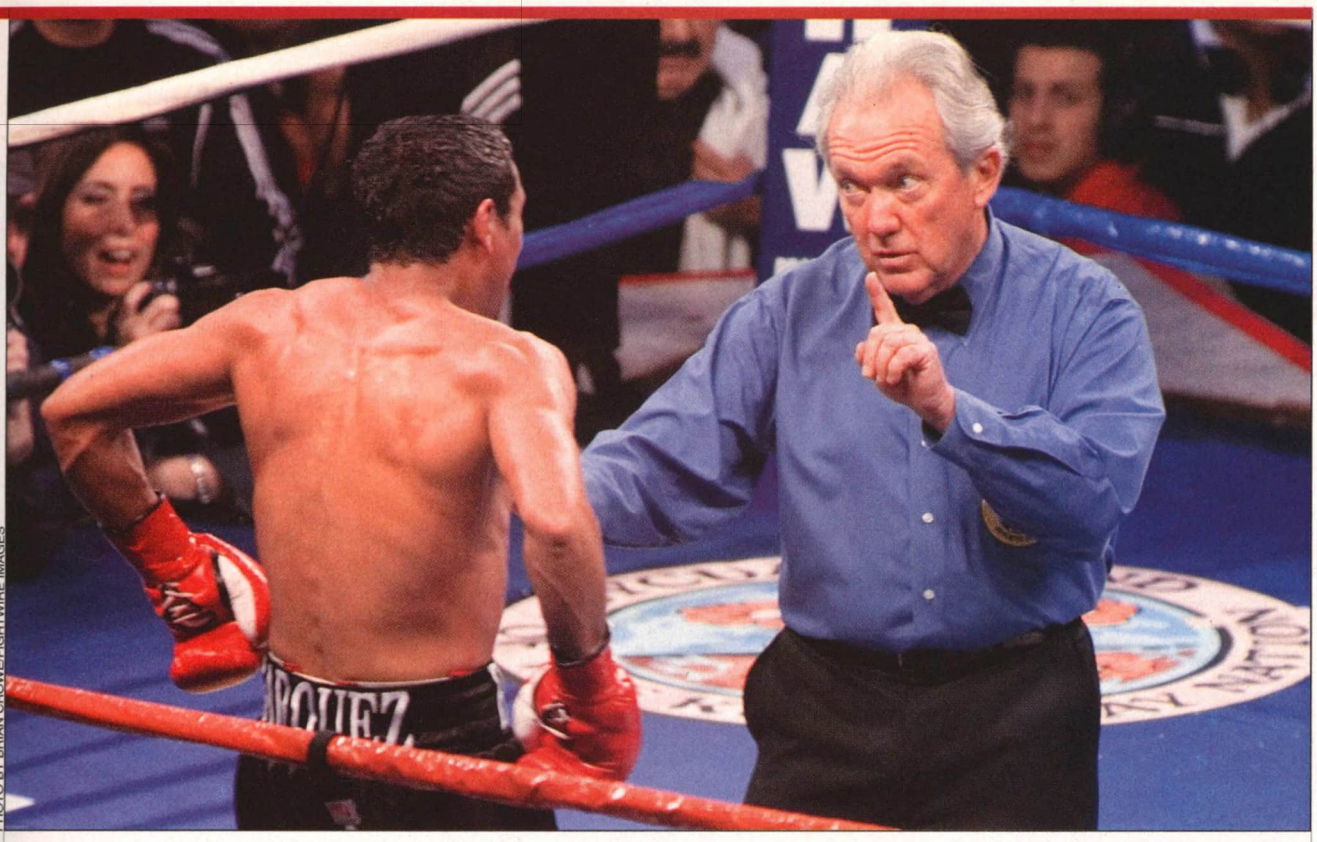


PHOTO BY BRIAN CROWE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Ref Russell knows the rules

Showtime bragged about Marquez-Vazquez II being RING's 2007 Fight of the Year. Yet the network instructed Jimmy Lennon not to mention Vazquez was defending THE RING belt. Showtime execs said it was okay to mention the title awarded by the bottom-feeding WBC though.

Jose Luis Castillo failed to make weight *again*?

Somebody should explain to judges Clark Sammartino and Don Trella that when you rob somebody as blatantly as they robbed Jose Gonzalez against Jason LeHoullier, you do it at gunpoint on a dark street, not in full view of an ESPN2 audience. After unheralded Gonzalez trounced house fighter LeHoullier in a hard-fought, junior middleweight tussle in Mashantucket, Connecticut, Trella had it 96-94 LeHoullier, Sammartino had it 95-95, and only George Smith scored it properly, 97-93 Gonzalez.

And Doug Tucker's atrocious, astonishing score of 120-108 for Jose Navarro when he lost a split decision to Cristian Mijares was so utterly contrary to what we'd just witnessed that it felt as though we'd all intruded into the private nightmare of a man showing up naked to a public gathering.

The Nevada commission has historically refused to notice even the most flagrant ineptitude or injustice. Hi there, Dalby Shirley. But we should all make it our business to keep a close eye on what it does or doesn't do about Tucker.

Ouch! Looks like I jinxed Juan Diaz when I complained he wasn't on our top 10 pound-for-pound list. ■

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Only one judge scored the Gonzalez-LeHoullier correctly

[Camera Clicks]

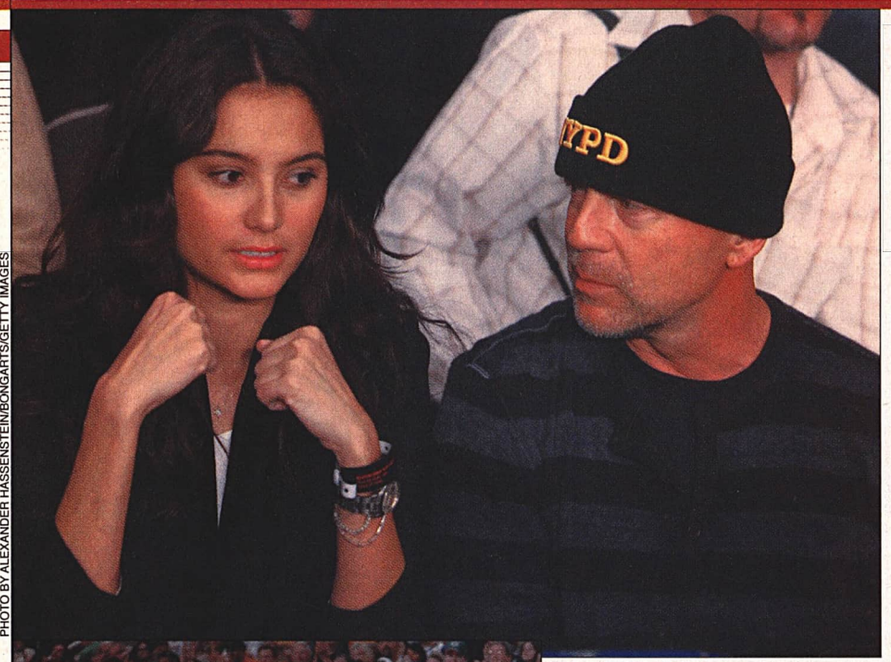


PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

The Wladimir Klitschko-Sultan Ibragimov fight at Madison Square Garden proved a fine place for Bruce Willis to show the world that ex-wife Demi Moore isn't the only one capable of luring in a younger mate. Here, the Die Hard *star's girlfriend, 27-year-old Victoria's Secret model Emma Hemings, assumes a fighting stance (presumably, Willis is training her to beat up Ashton Kutcher for him).*

Is it wise for a fighter to take part in a vodka-tasting event four days before he takes part in a major heavyweight unification bout? We'll say this much: It would have been wise to give fans a few shots of Nemiroff to help them get through Sultan Ibragimov's fight with Wladimir Klitschko.

PHOTO BY BARRY GOSSAGE/NBAE VIA GETTY IMAGES

Muhammad Ali heard that Phoenix Suns games are the perfect hangout for over-the-hill big men, so in March he checked out Shaquille O'Neal's new team in a game against the San Antonio Spurs. As "The Greatest" learned, Suns games are also an excellent place for him to find people he can call "gorilla" with no repercussions.

This photo can simply be titled "Why parents don't want their daughters becoming boxers." German featherweight Ina Menzer was a gory mess in her March bout against Canada's Sandy Tsagouris, but she battled through the blood and toughed out a close, unanimous decision over 10 rounds to win the battle of unbeatens and move to 20-0 (8).

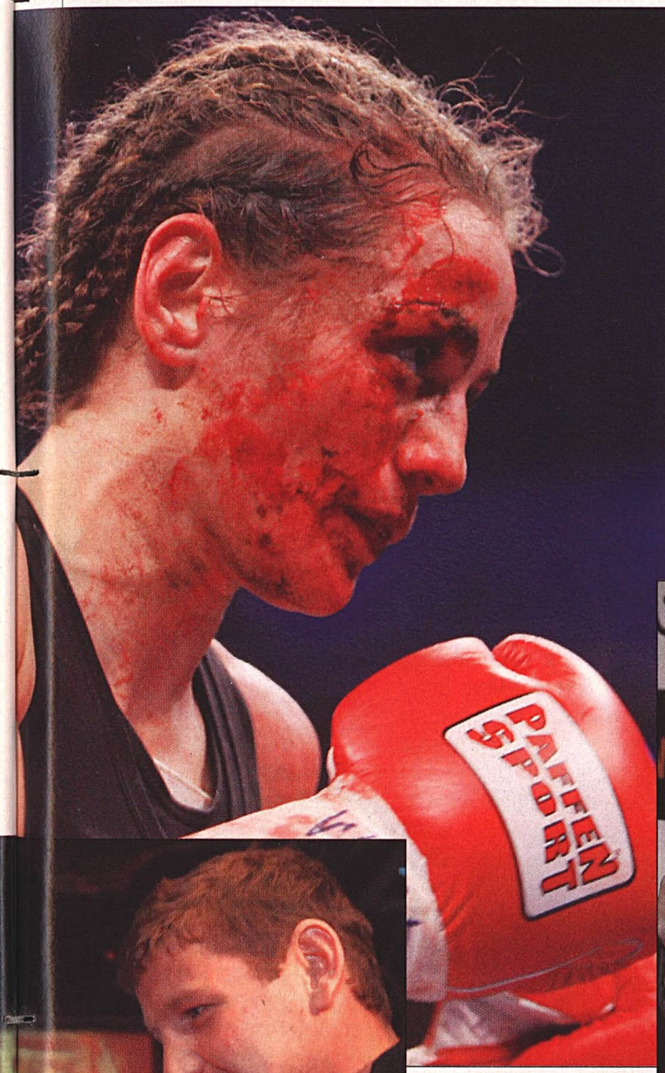


PHOTO BY PATRIK STOLLARZ/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

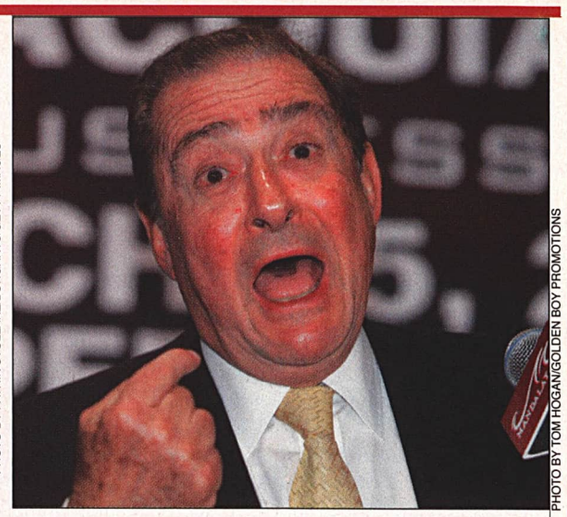


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

If you ever wanted a toilet-bowl's-eye view of what it looks like when Bob Arum is about to vomit, here ya go. No truth to the rumor that the Hall of Fame promoter wants to henceforth be known as "Bulimic Bob."

PHOTO BY STEPHEN LOVEKIN/GETTY IMAGES

Three-division former champ Emile Griffith knows a thing or two about sports documentaries, having been the subject of the critically acclaimed Ring Of Fire *a few years back, and in February he attended the New York premiere of ESPN's* Black Magic, *a doc about the history of segregation and integration in basketball. It's good to see Emile still smiling and going strong at age 70 (he hit the milestone birthday on February 3).*

By Joe Santoliquito

Vanes Martirosyan Junior Middleweight

PHOTOS BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Vanes Martirosyan didn't know any better. As a child, he was filled with the wonderful wishful things that pass through children's imaginations, like still believing in Santa Claus. Sitting on his father's lap, he'd lean over, nose away the long cuff over his father's right arm, and then kiss it. He'd look down at the stump that was once his father's right hand, blown apart holding a grenade while serving in the Soviet Red Army, thinking his magical kiss could somehow make it grow back.

It never did.

So Martirosyan would kiss his father's right arm again. Nothing. It frustrated Vanes. Though he never gave up. As he began boxing, he'd tell his father, "When I become a world champion, I'll buy you a right hand."

What "The Nightmare" is realizing is that *he's* been his father's right hand ever since he climbed into a boxing ring. Even today, the two could be riding in a car together, Vanes will spontaneously grab Norik's right arm and kiss it.

During his three-year pro career, Vanes' powerful right hand has kissed more than a few opponents to sleep. The Armenian expatriate, who moved with his family when he was four to the United States from the former Soviet satellite republic, was a member of the United States 2004 Olympic squad. He lost in the quarterfinals to Cuban veteran and eventual silver medalist Lorenzo Aragon.

But Martirosyan's pro career appears more advanced than any of his former '04 U.S. Olympic teammates. He's 19-0 (13) and has all of the exterior components lined up, managed by Shelly Finkel, promoted by Top Rank, and trained by Ronnie Shields.

That's what makes him different from other prospects with similar experience—that and being a 6-foot, 21-year old junior middleweight with a mule-kick for a punch. What makes Martirosyan more frightening is that he's starting to use his considerable height and reach to create openings for his power.

Pro Record

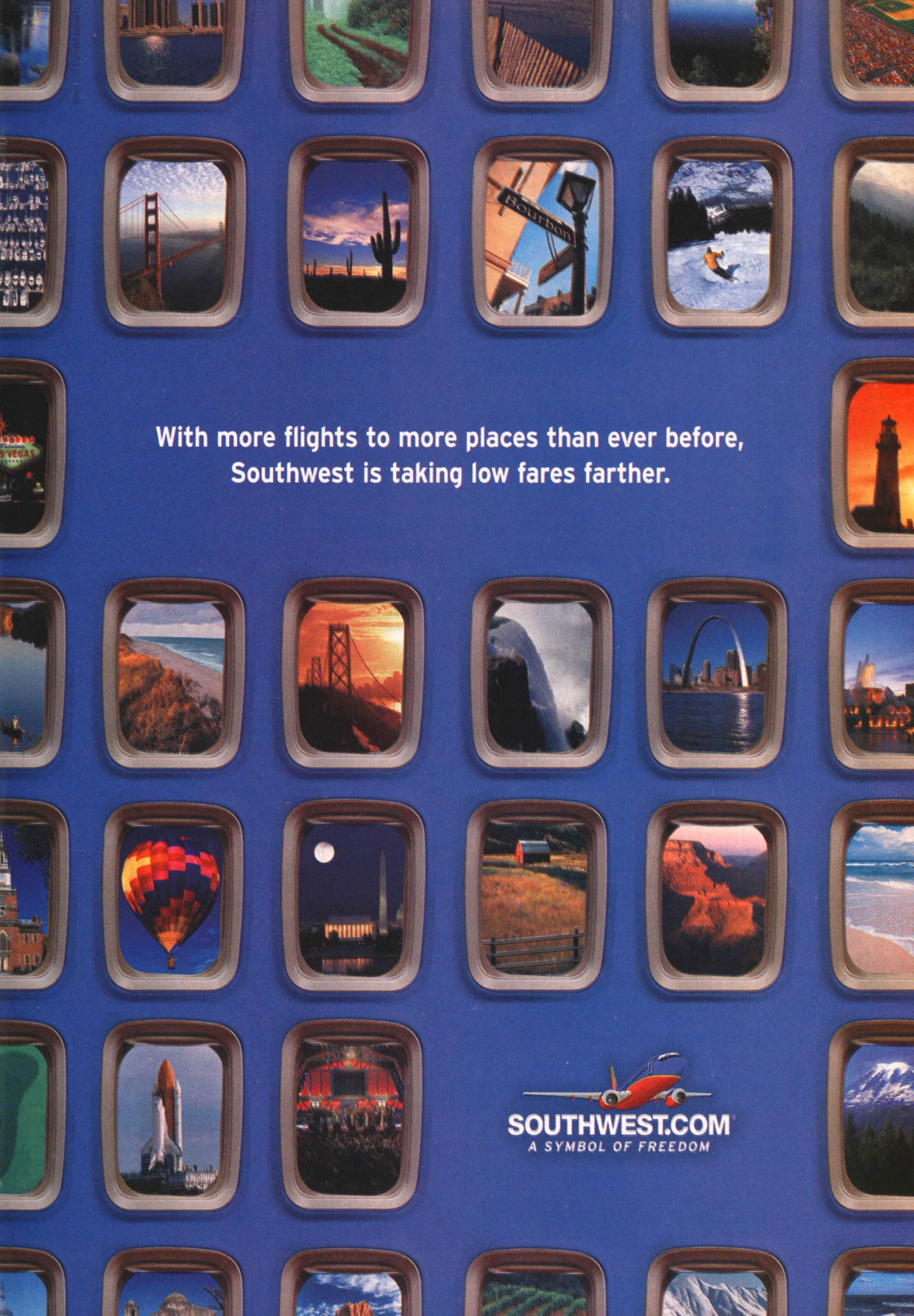
2005		
April 8	Jesse Orta, Fountain Hills, AZ	W 4
May 28	Jovanni Rubio, Los Angeles, CA	KO 1
Aug. 26	Fernando Vela, Houston, TX	W 4
Sept. 10	Gerardo Cesar Prieto, Los Angeles	W 6
Oct. 8	Tony Morales, Las Vegas, NV	KO 1
Nov. 12	Abdias Castillo, Las Vegas	KO 5
2006		
Feb. 18	Juan Pablo Montes de Oca, Las Vegas	KO 3
April 8	Tefo Seetso, Las Vegas	KO 3
June 3	Oscar Gonzalez, Las Vegas	KO 1
Aug. 12	Marcos Brooks, Las Vegas	W 6
Nov. 18	Edgar Reyes, Las Vegas	KO 4
2007		
Jan. 27	Taronze Washington, Anaheim, CA	KO 2
April 27	Nelson Estupinan, Houston, TX	KO 2
June 29	Alberto Mercedes, Camp Verde, AZ	KO 7
Aug. 30	Alexis Divison, Houston	KO 3
Oct. 4	Patrick Thompson, Las Vegas	W 6
Dec. 20	Dan Wallace, Las Vegas	KO 1
2008		
Jan. 4	Clarence Taylor, Los Angeles, CA	W 6
Feb. 7	Michi Munoz, Las Vegas	KO 3

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
19	19	0	0	13

"The important thing about Vanes is to keep in mind that he's only 21 years old," said Steve Farhood, the color analyst for Showtime's *ShoBox* series. "He's a fighter who's just beginning to learn how to maximize the effectiveness of his height and reach. A fighter like him has to use his jab, and judging by his most recent performances, he's beginning to do that. I would rate Vanes near the top of the U.S. Olympic class of '04 at this point. He's been very active, but I think he's a good year, to a year-and-a-half from fighting for a title. The activity is a huge plus; it's one of the differences between Vanes and his Olympic teammates."

Norik Martirosyan didn't have much when he relocated his family to Glendale, California. What he did have

(Continued on 122)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Nov. 1985: Will Hagler Feast On The Beast? Plus: Hagler-Mugabi & Hearns-Shuler previews, Lonnie Smith, Pintor-Meza, Chuck Hull, Benitez-Moley.

Dec. 1985: Michael Spinks: Against All Odds. Plus: Curry-McCrory preview, McGuigan-Taylor, Alexis Arguello, Michael Olajide, Chavez-Pratchett.

Jan. 1986: In Search Of A Heavyweight Champion. Plus: Azumah Nelson, Arguello-Jefferson, Olympic update, Chicago boxing.

May 1986: Hagler vs. Mugabi: Marvelous Marvin Tames The Beast. Plus: Marvin Johnson, McGuigan-Cabrera, Bramble-Crawley, Tyson-Ferguson, 10 worst decisions.

June 1986: Barry's Back In The USA: McGuigan Breathes A Breath Of Fresh Air Into American Fight Scene. Plus: Bobby Czyz, Robbie Sims, Qawi-Holyfield preview, Berbick-Thomas, Bruno-Coetzee.

Aug. 1986: Is Sugar Ray Still Sweet? Plus: Lloyd Honeyghan, Tyson-Green, Cooney-Gregg, Hall of Fame (Eder Jofre, Benny Lynch, Bud Taylor, Sam McVey, Nat Langham, John Chambers), Bernardo Pinango.

Sept. 1986: Gerry Cooney vs. Mike Tyson: Who Would Win? Plus: Cruz-McGuigan, Hearns-Medal, Tyson-Gross, Sims-Duran.

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June 1987: Vinny Paz: Phenom Or Phony? Plus: Tyson-Bonecrusher, Mark Breland, Brian Mitchell, Evander Holyfield, Czyz-Edwards, Olajide-Lee, Curry-Montgomery.

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March 1988: Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns: "Now I Own History." Plus: Lockridge & Mayweather, Tony Burton, Julio Cesar Chavez, blood.

April 1988: Evander Holyfield: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Special year-end awards, Holyfield-Qawi II, Foreman-Sekorski, Hill-Angulo.

May 1988: George Foreman: "I Can Beat Tyson." Plus: Tyson-Holmes, Jesse Benavides, Showtime, no-knockout artists.

Sept. 1988: Sugar Ray: Here He Comes Again! Plus: Andries-Czyz, Kid Chocolate, Don Dunphy, Don Lalonde.

Oct. 1988: Mike Tyson: What Price Glory? Plus: Tyson-Spinks, Hearns-Barkley, Davey Moore.

Nov. 1988: Donny Lalonde: "Sugar Ray is Out Of His Mind!" Plus: Hall of Fame selections (Carlos Ortiz, Joe Brown, Billy Graham, Cus D'Amato, Jimmy Jacobs), Nunn-Tate, Molinares-Starling, Honeyghan-Chung, '88 Olympians.

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THE PACQUIAO MARQUEZ FEUD

All We Can Do Is Pray For A Third Fight

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

By Joseph Santoliquito

Manny Pacquiao sat on a plush white sofa holding hands with his wife, Jinkee, staring at a pewter crucifix on a makeshift altar, deep in contemplative prayer. There were candles on both sides of the cross and his boxing boots sat a few inches behind. Next to the crucifix were his blood-splattered trunks and white robe he'd worn the night before.

Pacquiao's 61st-floor luxury suite at the Mandalay Bay was overflowing with his friends and admirers. Melodic Filipino hymns were being sung, almost drowning out the hollow

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

When Marquez went down from a Pacquiao left in the third round (opposite page), it ultimately proved to be the difference in a close, hard-fought battle that ended in a 12-round split decision victory for Pacquiao (above), who captured the vacant Ring *junior lightweight championship.*

clanging noise that could be heard every time somebody inadvertently kicked an empty beer bottle sitting on the floor outside "Pac-Man's" bedroom door. Flashbulbs and klieg lights illuminated the scene as Filipino TV cameras recorded the praying Pacquiao. A priest delivered a brief sermon, saying "our thoughts, our eyes, our souls are on the man who lays down his life for us in the ring, for his race, and for his people—Manny Pacquiao."

This is Pacquiao's Sunday morning ritual after every bone-jarring Saturday night in a boxing ring. Despite all the stories of his many past peccadilloes—the carousing, the drinking, the late-night gambling binges, his countless forays in Filipino pool halls—he is a religious man. The Sundays after his fights are his personal sanctuary, his time to ponder what he did the night before and to praise a higher authority for the bountiful physical tools that have made him a national treasure in the Philippines, an international boxing star, and a millionaire. Pacquiao repeatedly thanked the Filipino pastor he'd flown in from New York City, who blessed Pac-Man's fight attire and THE RING world championship belt, which sat on the left-hand corner of the altar.

This Sunday, however, was slightly different than others. The night before, Pacquiao had engaged in a fierce, punishing struggle with his nemesis, Juan Manuel Marquez, and was fortunate enough to emerge the winner. On this Sunday morning, March 16, 2008, he was ruminating about a timeline to retirement, how many more wars can he endure, and rethinking the way he fights.

Pacquiao's 12-round split decision victory over Marquez had made him THE RING's first junior lightweight world champion since the magazine launched its Championship Policy in 2002, but it was also a fight that had left him a physical mess. The cut under his right eye required 16 stitches, and his facial features were so distorted he looked like a disfigured Cyclops, a purplish mountain of flesh surrounding a slit where his right eye was supposed to be.

The previous evening, tiny scarlet ringlets of blood were all over the blue canvas, dots of both fighters' blood could be found on ringside laptop computers, and, if you looked closely enough, speckles could even be seen on the ring ropes.

But, despite the pain he must have

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Although Pacquiao has significantly improved his right hand since his first fight with Marquez, in May 2004, it was still his dynamite left that did most of the serious damage in the rematch. It was a hook similar to this that decked Marquez in the third and staggered him in the 10th round.

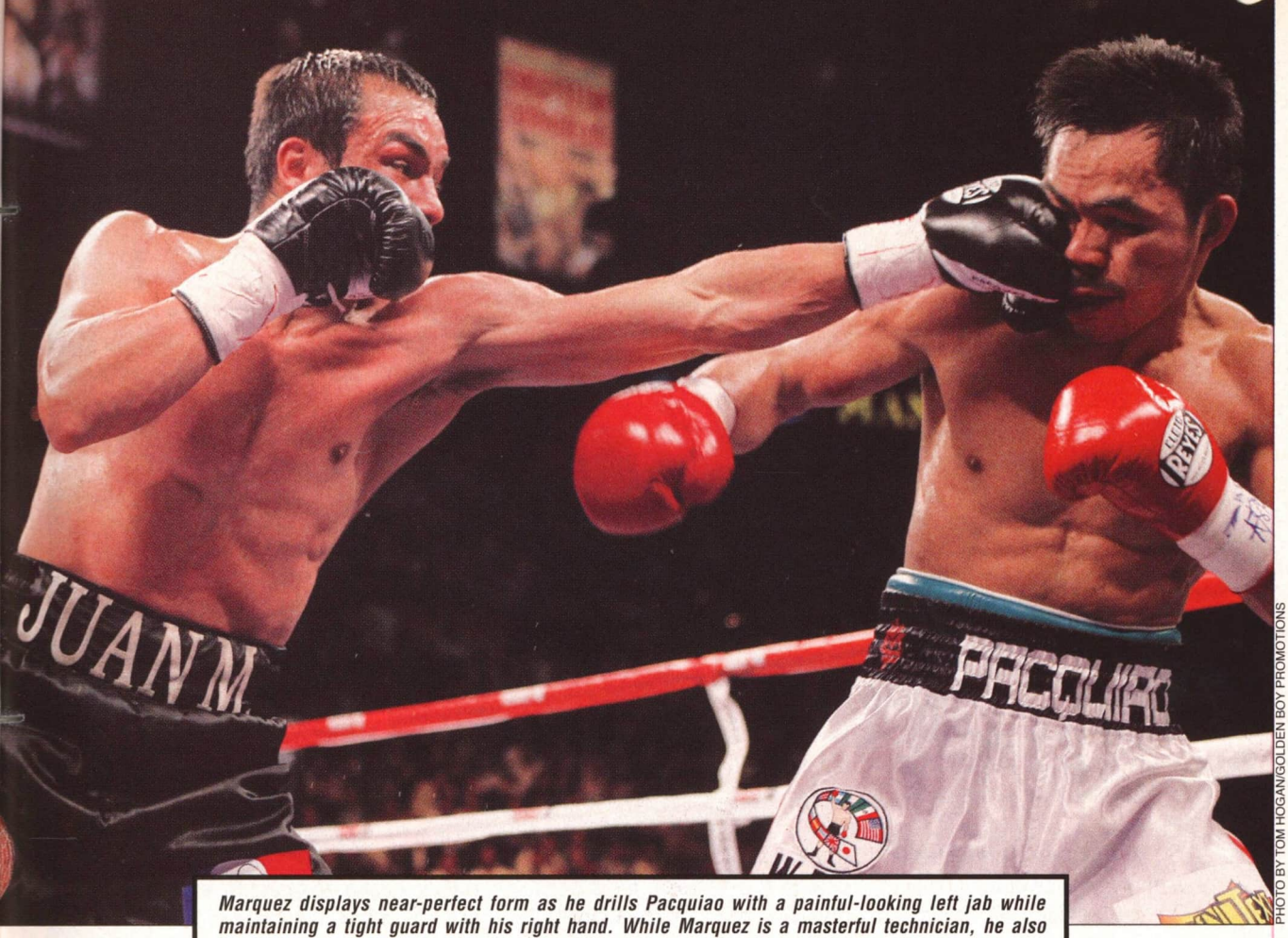

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Marquez displays near-perfect form as he drills Pacquiao with a painful-looking left jab while maintaining a tight guard with his right hand. While Marquez is a masterful technician, he also knows how to slug when necessary. He does not, however, punch as hard as "Pac-Man."

felt the morning after, Pacquiao seemed pleased to see everyone he came in contact with, his performance the night before serving as a tangible token that they could each carry back with them to the Philippines. Pacquiao has become more than a brand name to the Filipino people; he's become a savior of sorts, an idol in the truest sense of the word.

Still, it was impossible to ignore the pounding Pacquiao had taken in his rematch with Marquez. There were slight but significant signs that Pacquiao is slipping. "Typhoon Manny" has turned into a mild gale. Against Marquez, he no longer seemed willing to take the risks he once did, forsaking prolonged give-and-take exchanges in favor of a more measured approach. Their roles were reversed at times, with Marquez the aggressor and Pacquiao backing up on the defensive. Perhaps he could have finished Marquez with an aggressive, all-out assault. Instead, what resulted was a protracted, taxing battle.

"I don't want to see Manny in any more wars," said Pacquiao's Yoda-like trainer, Freddie Roach, who couldn't take two steps in the Mandalay Bay Casino throughout fight weekend without a group of Filipinos stopping him for pictures or to sign autographs. "I'd like him to change, but I don't know if he'll ever change. We can't have what we experienced against Marquez again. I don't want to see him get hurt, but Manny's ferocity, that's what makes him. That's what makes him a national hero to the Filipino people. But it drives me up a wall. Manny had good head movement—for one round. Maybe one round and change.

"But we have to start looking at wrapping some things up. I would like to see Manny go another two years, maybe six more fights, three fights a year. In the next two years, he'll do everything we can do and that's it. He's 29, but that's not his age. He's much older than that. It's the battles he's been in. Once I see him noticeably slipping, that's it. It's over. Manny is like my son and there's no way I want to ever see him get hurt."

Pacquiao threw everything into the Marquez rematch, which was four years in the making. It was by far his best training camp. His most dedicated training camp. Even so, his second fight with Marquez was also one of his most arduous.

"Believe me, if Manny didn't work as hard, dedicate himself to winning this fight by plunging everything into this, and remaining mentally focused, you wouldn't be talking to me right now, you'd be talking to Nacho [Beristain, Marquez' trainer]," Roach said. "Manny had to put everything into this fight."

It's been well documented that Pacquiao has changed his personal habits. He claims that he has not taken a drink of alcohol since his birthday, December 17. He doesn't gamble as much as he used to, though some on his team say he still needs time to let off some steam. He's come to realize that he has to take much better care of

Another Tough Break For Marquez

Juan Manuel Marquez stood there, seemingly frozen in time. The Mexican junior lightweight contender couldn't believe what he had just heard, so someone on his team had to whisper in his ear, repeating what ring announcer Michael Buffer had just said: "And new junior lightweight champion of the woooorld, Mannnny Pacquiao!"

The first thing Marquez thought was: *Not again!*

"What does this man have to do to win a world championship belt?" Nacho Beristain, Marquez' trainer/manager, asked rhetorically to no one in particular, shaking his head as he frantically paced the ring after the final verdict of the Pacquiao-Marquez rematch was read.

So Marquez let the world know how angry he was at the postfight press conference, and privately, one-on-one with THE RING after his postfight tirade.

"I would give up any concessions to get back in the ring with Pacquiao, but I want people to know that Juan Manuel Marquez won that fight," he said. "The public who watched and the media at ringside know who won that fight. It's things like this is what hurts boxing. Seeing this result is an insult to fans who watch boxing. It's really disappointing to me because it's now happened to me many times."

The loss marked the second time in two years that Marquez was handed a defeat. He lost the WBA featherweight title in another controversial finish against Chris John, back in March 2006. In that fight, Marquez was penalized twice for repeated low blows, in the 10th and 11th rounds, resulting in scores of 116-112, 117-111, and 116-110 in John's favor. Although he was not penalized for any infraction during the Pacquiao rematch, Marquez still feels he was the victim of an injustice.

"I had him all night with the right hand. Did you see [Pacquiao's] face after the fight? Did you? This right hand did that to him," said Marquez, holding up his right hand, the middle knuckle of which was extremely swollen.

Marquez and his team had put together a battle plan that seemed to have Pacquiao completely confused in the opening two rounds. Freddie Roach, "Pac-Man's" trainer, said that they had envisioned Marquez delivering the right hand. "But Manny kept doing the opposite of what we trained to do," Roach said. "Give credit to Marquez for forcing that, but also, Manny didn't do what he was supposed to do. That's what led to some problems there."

Problems that Pacquiao appeared to erase with the left hook that downed Marquez in the third.

"He never hurt me," Marquez maintained. "He caught me off-balance. Right now all I can say is that Pacquiao is in a bad position. He knows what the truth is. We'll wait for a rematch, but I doubt Pacquiao will ever take it."

—J.S.

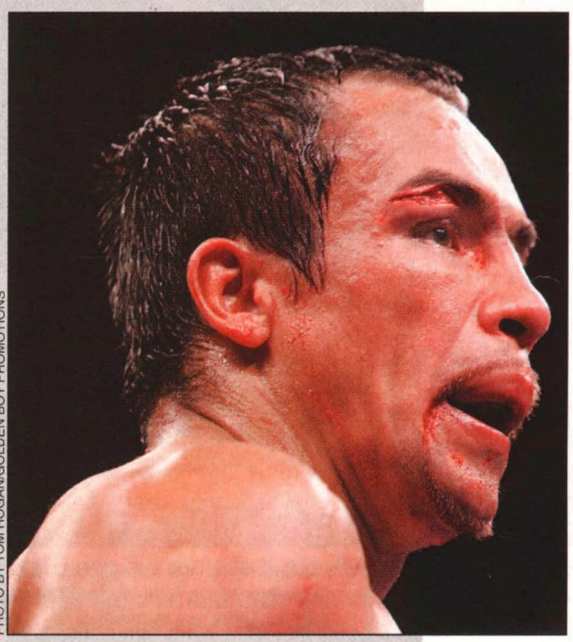

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Marquez was not happy with the verdict

himself to endure the kind of battle he did against Marquez.

Pacquiao never expected to have the kind of start he did in their first fight, May 8, 2004, when he knocked Marquez down three times in the opening round. But was able to land a perfect left hook to the jaw midway into the third round that sent Marquez down hard. Marquez beat referee Kenny Bayless' count, but walked unsteadily to the wrong corner when the bell sounded to end the round.

"I knew I had him when I knocked him down in that third round," said Pacquiao. "A lot of that had to do with my training. I have to take better care of myself right now. But I don't think I've slowed down. I still fight the same way. I think. I'm just trying to box more. I feel pretty good too. My face might not look like it, but look at Marquez' face and the cut on his [right] eye. I focused hard for this fight because Marquez is a warrior who has my respect. But once I knocked him down, that was it. I was in his head. Marquez thought the same thing that happened to him the first time would happen again."

Marquez, of course, was well aware of what had happened in the opening round of their first fight, which ended in a 12-round draw after he staged a remarkable comeback. That near-disastrous first round had been gnawing at him for four years and it is why the 31-year resident of Mexico City charged Pacquiao at the sound of the opening bell. His plan was quite effective, and he smacked Pacquiao repeatedly with lead right hands for which the Filipino didn't seem to have an answer.

"I think I proved that Pacquiao is not the Superman everyone thinks he is," Marquez said through an interpreter. "The Pacquiao camp didn't think we would use the right hand the way we did. Pacquiao thought my right hand was hurt. He found out it wasn't."

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Pacquiao splits Marquez' guard with a southpaw jab. Although the Filipino idol has clearly improved his boxing technique, he seems to have lost some of the ferocity that originally took him to the top.

Then came that third-round hook, which must have given Marquez, 130, a nasty case of déjà vu. Nonetheless, he appeared fully recovered by the fifth round, and continued to score well with his right hand. Marquez enjoyed another good round in the sixth, but an accidental clash of heads opened a cut over his right eye in the seventh, a grueling round that also saw Pacquiao, 129, cut over his right eye.

Marquez drilled Pacquiao directly in his injured eye in the eighth, and proceeded to have one of his best rounds, nailing his adversary with several jarring combinations. But Pac-Man fought back effectively in the ninth, and then almost put Marquez down again in the 10th, when another sizzling left hand had the Mexican staggering uncontrollably away from his tormentor, ala Kelly Pavlik in the first Jermain Taylor fight. Like Pavlik, Marquez pulled himself together and lasted the round.

Marquez was slightly busier in the 11th and also edged the give-and-take 12th by landing a few more clean shots than Pacquiao.

"I really don't know what else I have to do to be a winner," said Marquez. "I don't know how much more I have to prove. I thought I did everything possible to win the fight. It's frustrating. I'm angry. But what could I do? I know I proved that I'm better than Manny Pacquiao."

Unfortunately for Marquez, two of the official judges didn't agree with his assessment. Jerry Roth saw it in his favor, 115-112, but Tom Miller and Duane Ford scored it for Pacquiao by tallies of 114-113 and 115-112, respectively. THE RING scored it 115-113 for Marquez, who also won on a number of media scorecards, but it was a very close fight, which even Roach admitted could have gone either way.

Where do the fighters go from here?

For Pacquiao, 46-3-2 (35), it looks like a move up to 135 pounds, where he'll take on WBC lightweight titlist David Diaz, who fought on the undercard and won a 10-round majority decision over tough journeyman Ramon Montano.

"I was hoping Pacquiao would win, because it would be a great opportunity for me," said Diaz, his face discolored from the constant jabs it absorbed from the light-hitting Montano. "Pacquiao is the man to beat. Before it was Oscar [De La Hoya], now anyone around 130, 135, they want to fight Pacquiao. He's beaten everyone around 130, and they're talking about me. Hey, they think they can beat me. Everyone thinks they can beat me. I actually like being underestimated because it means more big fights and more money for me. Erik Morales thought he'd beat me and look what happened to him. I don't know how many more wars Pacquiao has in him. I just hope he has one more war left in him for me."

It's a fight that makes sense for both Pacquiao and Diaz, and relatively easy to

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Marquez used his right hand to punish Pacquiao throughout the fight, and came on strong the final two rounds to earn a narrow edge on a number of media scorecards. It was not, however, enough to swing things his way with two of the official judges.

make because both are promoted by Top Rank. What is questionable, however, is the timing. Right after Pacquiao-Marquez II, Top Rank President Bob Arum announced a June 28 date, back at the Mandalay Bay. Pacquiao's people said that they may want to wait a little longer and make sure Manny's cuts have enough time to heal.

"I know what Top Rank would like to do, but I have to think about what's best for Manny, and that would be a fight with Diaz sometime in July," Roach said. "I'm thinking two months off, which is something I want to talk to Manny about, just to take a rest, especially after the kind of fight we had with Marquez. He needs a rest."

Naturally, Marquez, 48-4-1 (35), wants a third fight with Pacquiao.

"I may stay here at 130 or I may go up to 135 and go after [Pacquiao] there," Marquez said. "I think I deserve a rematch."

Pacquiao agrees: "Marquez does deserve a rematch, but that's not up to me. I'll let Bob Arum and the promoters decide. I would fight Marquez again, but he's going to have to wait. I can still make 130, but I think I'd feel more comfortable at 135. That's why I'm going to move up."

After the Sunday mass came to a conclusion, Pacquiao held small audiences for three hours, signing everything from hats to T-shirts to gloves and posters. Someone brought up the possibility that Pacquiao is the greatest fighter in the history of the Philippines, greater even than the legendary Flash Elorde. Pacquiao just smiled.

"I'm just an ordinary man," he said. "Being the greatest anything is never in my mind. I think of myself as an ordinary man and an ordinary fighter. I was thinking about my fight during mass, and the time I suffered the cut. Being at mass brought that back for me and how fortunate I am that I survived it.

"But I can't change as a person or as a fighter. I have to remain the same. People change all of the time. They get big heads and they change. I don't want that to happen to me. I don't want to change, in or outside the ring. I like to fight. I'd fight with bare hands if I had to. I won't change my style, because that's what people expect when they see me. It wouldn't be right. I'm not slowing down, no, not me. Marquez kept hitting me with that right hand and I kept coming at him. I knew in my heart that he couldn't beat me, and I knew that he was scared too. He was afraid of me, but I wasn't afraid of him. I'm not afraid of anything, except for not praying and going to mass on Sunday. I'm afraid what might happen if I don't do that." ■

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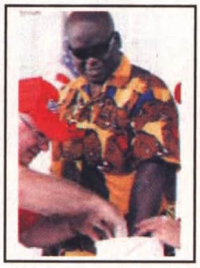
BANQUET OF CHAMPIONS

Reminiscing . . . "Sugar" Shane Mosley shares fight stories with banquet crowd.

FIST CASTING



Everlasting . . . Fist cast by James "Buster" Douglas.

PARADE OF CHAMPIONS

Marvelous . . . Marvin Hagler waves to fans.

Hooray . . . George Foreman enjoys fans along parade route.

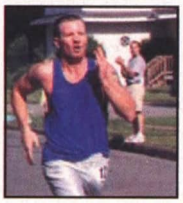
BOOK SIGNINGS

Hall of Fame referee Arthur Mercante signs his autobiography for the fans.

MUSEUM GROUNDS

Autographs . . . "Sweet Pea" Pernell Whitaker spends time signing autographs on the Museum grounds.

5K RACE, FUN RUN



Finish Line . . . "Irish" Micky Ward in stride.

Go . . . Ken Norton officially starts race of celebrity boxers and runners.

INDUCTION CEREMONY

A Moment in Time . . . Proudly draped in Panamanian flag, Duran delivers induction speech.

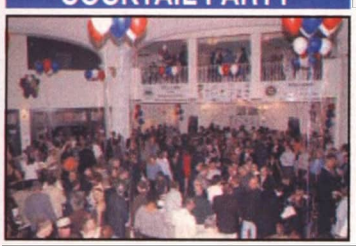
BOXING CARD SHOW

A Collector's Dream . . . Boxing memorabilia for fans. The world's only all-boxing show draws collectors from throughout the world.

GOLF TOURNAMENT

Chip . . . Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

COCKTAIL PARTY

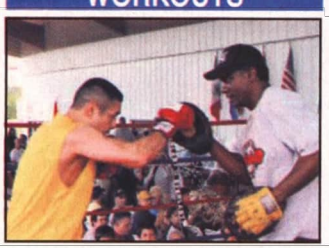


Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

MUSEUM

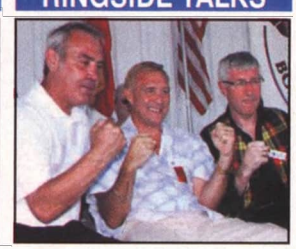
Ricardo Lopez points to his championship trunks.

WORKOUTS



Oscar Diaz works the bag mitts with Tommy Brooks during public workout.

RINGSIDE TALKS



Minter, Stracey, and Buchanan provide stories.

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The *Slump* continues ...

A bunch of belts does not a champion make: Between them, Wladimir Klitschko (left) and Samuel Peter (right) have numerous alphabet title belts, but neither of them is the legitimate heavyweight champion of the world. There hasn't been a true heavyweight champion since Lennox Lewis retired, which is an unhealthy situation for the sport.

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

When Will The Heavyweights Catch Up To The Rest Of Boxing?

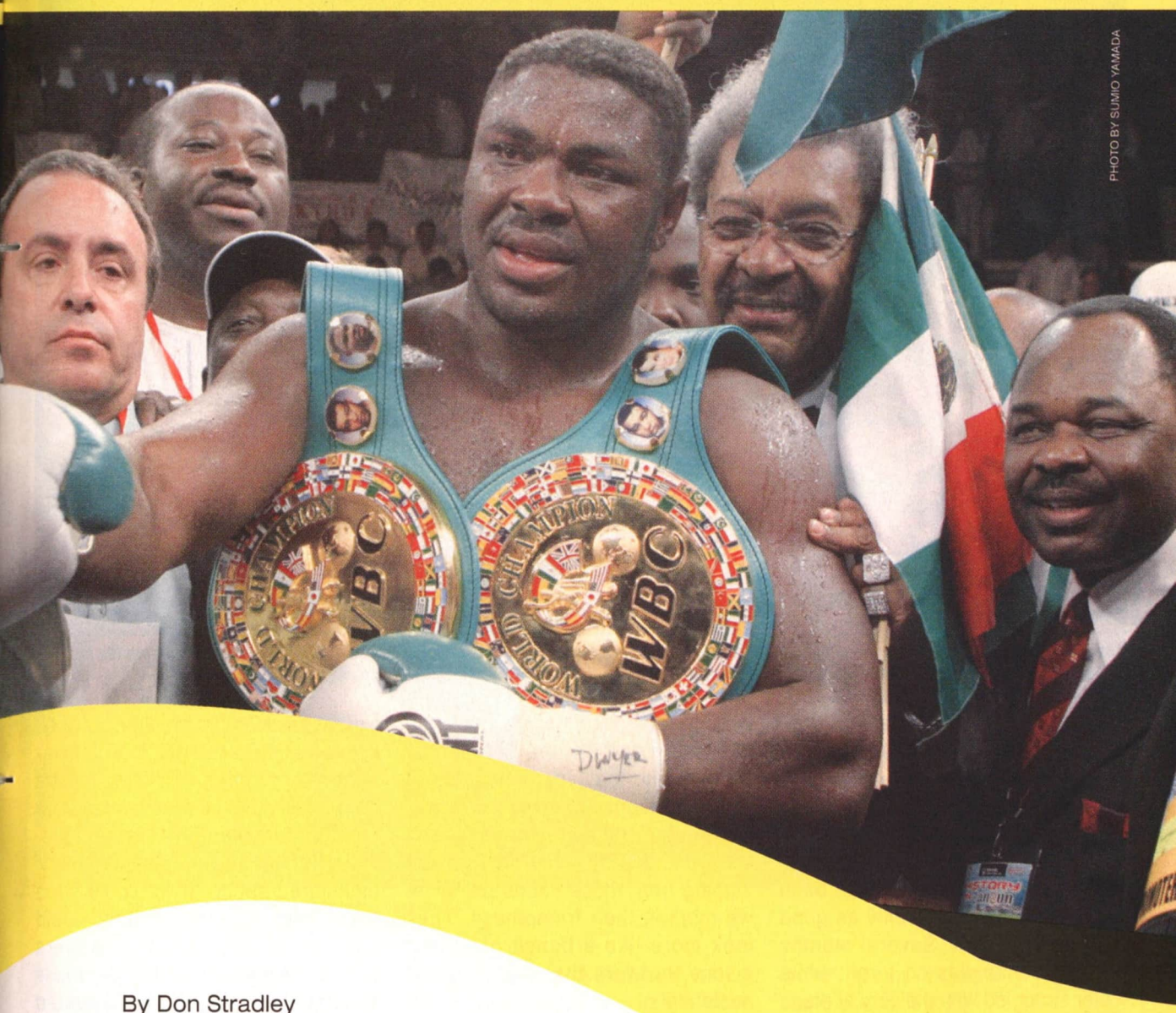

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

By Don Stradley

For those of us who grew up with tales of supermen training behind the Iron Curtain, the Wladimir Klitschko-Sultan Ibragimov fight had to be a disappointment.

This is what we'd feared?

Their fight was so bad that when Sam

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Klitschko's 12-round decision over Ibragimov at Madison Square Garden was an ugly, uneventful affair that did next to nothing to improve the image of today's heavyweight division. Even the Ukrainian media was critical of Klitschko's uninspiring performance.

Peter scored a sixth-round kayo of creaky Oleg Maskaev two weeks later, the media went gaga. But it's no wonder people have turned to Peter. At least he finds some pleasure in hitting guys.

It is Klitschko's bad luck to be in a game where you're only as good as your last fight. Several months ago, Klitschko was on a roll, while Peter struggled with the very average Jameel McCline. But since Peter looked good most recently, Klitschko is the one who gets picked over.

Klitschko may also be taking the brunt for something that has been brewing for more than a decade.

This is an odd time in boxing history. The majority of THE RING's top-10 heavyweights are made up of Eastern and Central Europeans. Beneath the top 10 are many more fighters from Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Poland, Germany, and Belarus. We don't mind fighters coming from those countries. What we mind is their frumpiness. They look more like a bunch of retired discus throwers than heavyweight contenders.

Long before they invaded heavyweight boxing, Central and Eastern Europeans, particularly Russians, invaded professional hockey with great success. So it was reasonable to expect this new wave of heavyweight fighters to do something similar. We'd hoped a heavyweight Kostya Tszyu might emerge, a cocky, cold-blooded strategist with a killer right hand, someone who combined passion with precision. No one would mind a heavyweight Tszyu. Alas, these former Soviet heavies are an uninspired bunch. If we could send these guys back in time, they could have made good sparring partners for Larry Holmes. Maybe. This crop is so bad that John Ruiz just lumbered back into the number-10 spot.

Part of the problem with this group of heavyweights is that they are not hungry, young fighters coming to our shores to take over boxing's glamour division, and they aren't members of an ethnic group trying to establish themselves in America through

A Blown Opportunity

Two whores in Times Square clawing each other over an old Lotto ticket would've been more thrilling.

Against southpaw Sultan Ibragimov, Wladmir Klitschko was less "Dr. Steelhammer," and more "Dr. Slaphammer," spending most of the bout slapping at Ibragimov's tentative right jab. His non-effort was booed from the second round on. Even the reporters who had traveled across an ocean to write about their hero from the front lines were impatient.

"He is a very difficult opponent and his defensive style didn't make it easy to be impressive," said Klitschko, who threw very few right hands all night. "I thought I was going to knock this guy out, but it wasn't easy."

Well, it's always difficult to knock someone out by hitting him on the wrist.

Klitschko, 50-3 (44), Kiev, Ukraine, started driving Ibragimov back with straight, hard punches during the eighth and ninth rounds. Then he went back to his slapping game. Ibragimov, 22-1-1 (17), Rostov, Russia, showed his frustration in the late rounds by lunging at Klitschko and grappling with him. In the 10th they both fell in a tangle. The loud boom made by Klitschko's body when they hit the canvas was the most excitement of the night.

Judge Don Ackerman (USA) scored the bout 119-109, Steve Weisfeld (USA) had it 118-110, and Chuck Giampa (USA) scored it 117-111, all for Klitschko. THE RING also saw it for Klitschko, 116-112. At 238, Klitschko was the lightest he'd been since his 2000 bout with Chris Byrd. Ibragimov weighed 219. The referee was Wayne Kelly (USA).

The crowd cheered when it was over, but they couldn't have enjoyed Klitschko's performance. Perhaps they cheered because it was over.

—D.S.

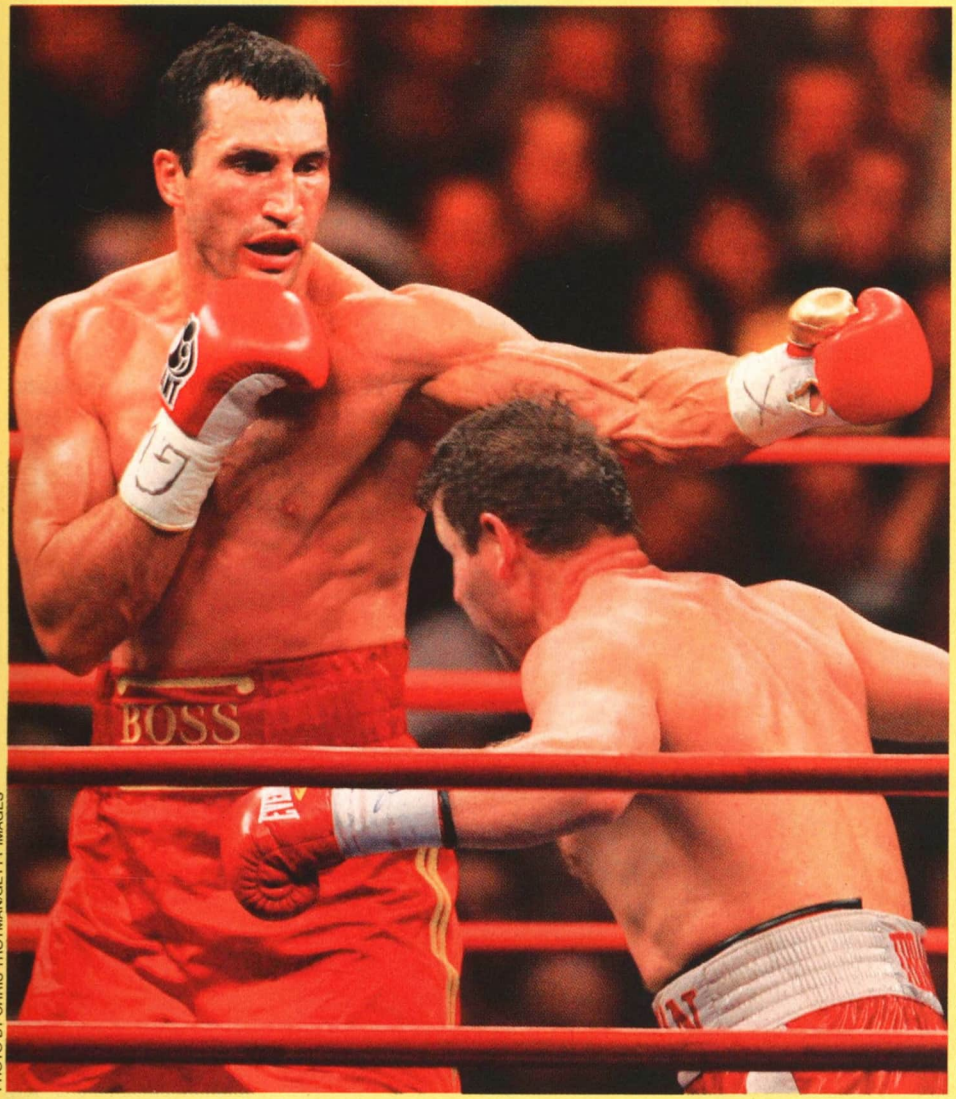

PHOTO BY CHRIS TROTMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Typical flailing from the Klitschko-Ibragimov snore-a-thon

boxing. They are simply remnants of the old Soviet sports machine. They are the Russian equivalents of the 1990s Cuban heavyweight Jorge Luis Gonzales, a two-time gold medalist at the Pan American Games who turned pro and flopped.

Historically, the best heavyweights are not cultivated in gyms, but rather they are plucked from alleys like feral cats. Think of Jack Dempsey riding the rails and brawling in the hobo jungles, fighting for nickels because he had to fight or starve. Think of teenage George Foreman, hiding under his house from the local sheriff. You can teach a man to box, but you can't teach him to be the "Manassa Mauler." For these Eastern European heavyweights, boxing is not a glorious rocket ride out of poverty. It's just a sport, like volleyball.

A sense of panic always sets in when the heavyweight division seems weak, especially with no dominant champion to thrill the masses. There were great voids to fill after the retirements of Jim Jeffries, Dempsey, Louis, and Rocky Marciano. When Muhammad Ali finally retired, the

press fretted over boxing's future. Holmes carried on admirably, and then Mike Tyson showed up like a bullet train to create the most interest in boxing since the days of Ali. Lennox Lewis was not a great champion in the sense that Ali and Louis were great champions, but his absence, now going on 4 1/2 years, has left an ever-widening hole to fill.

The heavyweight champion is to boxing what the cleanup hitter is to baseball. Even in 2008, with so many great fighters in the lighter divisions, a competent heavyweight king is still necessary. Face it, when was the last time someone said the fortunes of boxing depended on the flyweights?

"There is a mystique attached to the heavyweight division," said HBO's Jim Lampley, who stresses the importance of heavyweights to the general public, as opposed to the "boxing cult" that is aware of the lighter-weight classes. "That mystique is indelible and it's not going to change. Trouble in the heavyweight division means trouble for boxing." The problem is compounded by two generations of fans, the Baby Boomers and the Generation Xers, who came of age when the heavyweights were arguably the best they have ever been.

What we're looking at now is Joe Louis' Bum of the Month Club without Louis. Imagine that era without "The Brown Bomber." Tony Galento and Buddy Bear might have been champions. But a weak division is tolerable if you have a strong champion at the top. That's what made Tyson so compelling. Right now there is no champion, and that makes a bad division seem worse.

THE RING would recognize the winner of a bout between Klitschko and Peter as the world champion. In fact, a bout between the two might've crowned our champion as far back as September 2006 when Peter landed in our top three after defeating James Toney. The irony is that they've already fought, with Klitschko winning via points, in September 2005.

For the sake of speculation, let's say Klitschko beats Peter again. Would an overly cautious Ukrainian champ benefit the fight game?

"It's not good for boxing," said Lampley, who thought Klitschko was improving until the Ibragimov clunker. "Americans don't understand that Klitschko has incredible money-making opportunities in Europe. He doesn't have to impress us. In his head, it's 12 easy rounds and then he's out of here."

Lampley believes Klitschko would

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

While Peter-Maskaev was far from a classic fight, at least it provided a few thrills before "The Nigerian Nightmare" clubbed "The Big O" into a sixth-round TKO defeat. Fans hungry for a dominant heavyweight are gravitating toward Peter because of his aggressive attitude and big punch.

Peter Mauls Maskaev

Oleg Maskaev, who probably has the words "reliable journeyman" stamped on his passport, landed a few hard blows to Sam Peter's face during their March 9 bout at the Plaza De Toros in Cancun, Mexico, but as the rounds progressed he began to look older and balder. By the sixth, when Peter was knocking him around with ease, Maskaev looked every minute of his 39 years.

Referee Guadelupe Garcia (Mexico) stopped the bout at 2:56 of the sixth. "He didn't knock me out," said Maskaev, 34-6 (26), who didn't protest the stoppage. "He shook me and knocked me back, and the referee did the right thing. He was hitting me with too many punches."

Peter, 30-1 (23), Las Vegas, by way Akwaibom, Nigeria, was all business. Looking fit at 250 1/2, he blasted Maskaev into a corner during the second round and seemed like he might end it right there. Then, rather than punching himself out, he methodically stalked Maskaev for the next few rounds. Maskaev, 243, Sacramento, California, by way of Kazakhstan, was crafty and scored with counterpunches, but he seemed too old to compete at a physical level with Peter.

"They're all going down," Peter growled after the bout, referring to the contenders who may challenge him.

Many in the media praised Peter for replacing his wilder tendencies with more professionalism. But many who praised him glossed over the fact that Maskaev was an old fighter who has been kayoed many times in the past. Would this fight have been any different had it happened three years ago when Peter was crude and unpolished? Probably not. But even if Peter is not the division's savior, he is still the number-two heavyweight. Klitschko should fight him.

—D.S.

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Peter punches Maskaev into the ropes

be given a pass if fans liked him more or if he was American.

"I think there's a cultural thing that makes it difficult for Americans to cotton onto these guys," Lampley said. "In the sports establishment they grew up in, if you can win easily without taking chances, it's far more acceptable within their culture than it is in the USA. For some reason, in the USA, whether it's our Wild West background or the Second Amendment, we got it in our heads that if you don't go in the ring and fight to the death, you're not doing the job. There's a far greater appreciation for pure craftsmanship over there."

Klitschko wasn't exactly hailed overseas, either. The *Kyiv Post* described his win over Ibragimov as "colorless," and chided Klitschko for taking "no chances and landing no memorable punches." The *Ukrainian Journal* called him "unspectacular."

A heavyweight battle between a Ukrainian and a Russian in Madison Square Garden should've been historic. *The New York Times* ran no less than six stories about this fight.

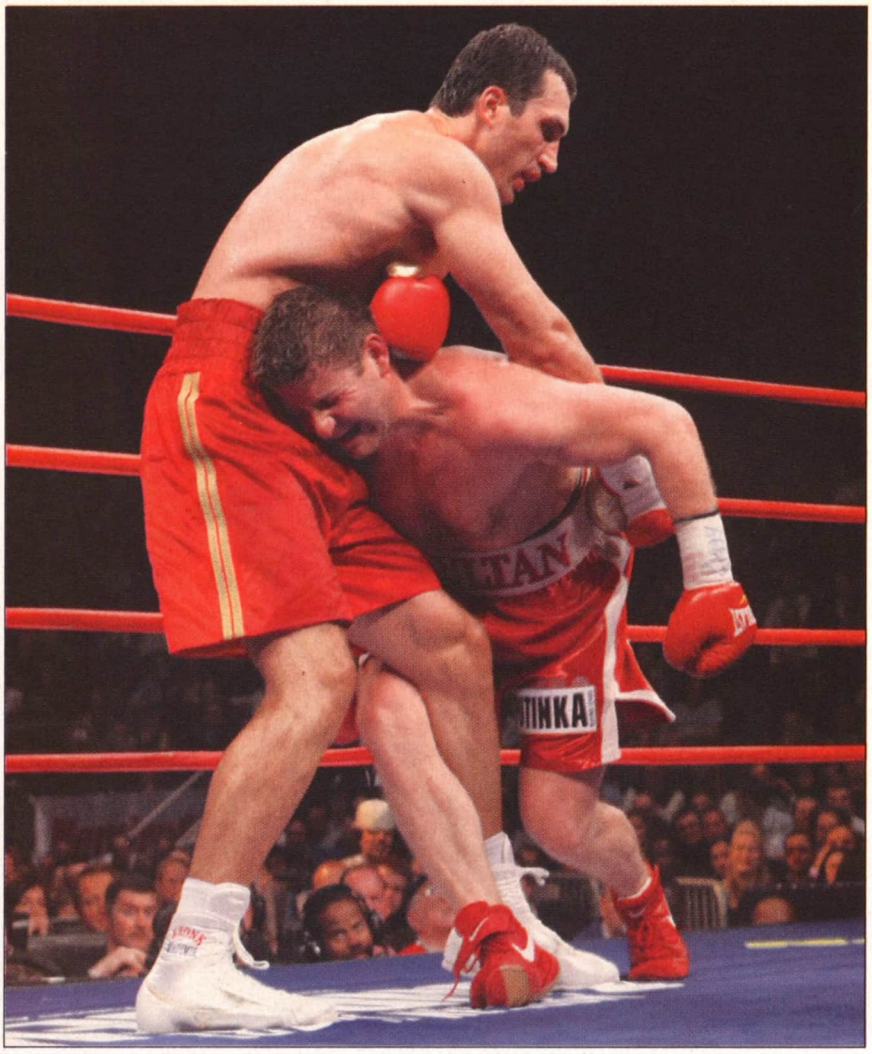

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Klitschko and Ibragimov get their legs tangled, which resulted in an ungainly tumble to the canvas. Sadly, the embarrassing pratfall was the closest thing to excitement the two heavyweights provided the more than 14,000 paying customers.

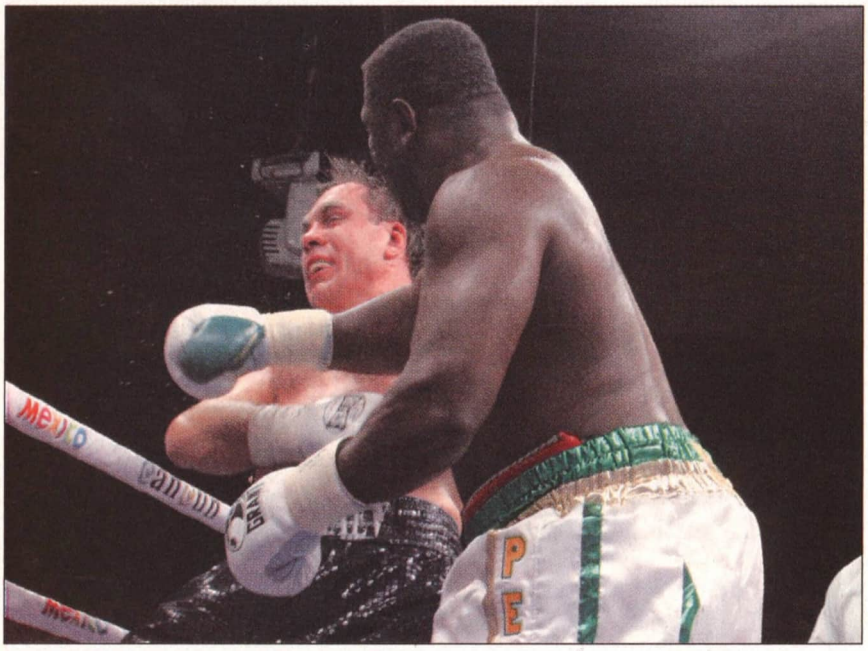

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Peter rocks Maskaev with a potent right to the head in the sixth round. It was the beginning of the end for the Russian, who was soon battered into the ropes, where Garcia stopped the bout to save Maskaev from additional punishment.

One wag referred to Klitschko and Ibragimov as "the sons of Drago," referring to the Soviet terror who nearly destroyed the fictional Rocky Balboa two decades ago. The floor of the Garden was littered with colorful flyers saying, "The Russians Are Coming." New York's Russian and Ukrainian population helped swell Garden attendance to 14,011.

Then, with so much attention being paid, Klitschko and Ibragimov blew an opportunity to impress the world.

There are three guarantees when Klitschko fights in New York: beautiful Russian women in the audience, a loud argument between a German film crew and Garden security (usually stemming from a German cameraman not understanding that a credential from Klitschko-David Bostice will not work in 2008), and a sense of disappointment that after 53 fights Klitschko still seems a work in progress. He's had almost as many fights as Ali or Louis had in their entire careers, and we're still not sure about him. Burt Randolph Sugar, that salty, old fight reporter, howled from ringside: "I'd take Primo Carnera at 6-1 over both of these guys."

The day after the bout, Klitschko sheepishly told HBO boxing boss Ross Greenburg that he had been concerned about Ibragimov's looping left. From our vantage point, Ibragimov was throwing his left like he was trying to scoop ice cream out of a vat.

Still, Klitschko is the best of a poor lot, and Klitschko-Peter II would be the best fight in the division. Unfortunately, there seems to be roadblocks in the way of a rematch, not the least of which is that Klitschko could chalk Peter up as past history.

Klitschko might also be considering Nikolay Valuev or Ruslan Chagaev as possible opponents. Those names don't mean much to Americans, but they would be blockbuster opponents for Klitschko in Europe. Both are less dangerous than Peter, and would generate lots of money for Klitschko. A fighter who can draw, as Klitschko does, millions of viewers when he fights on German television, would be

The Return Of The Giant

When Ruslan Chagaev relieved Nicolay Valuev of the WBA heavyweight title in April last year, it appeared as if "The Russian Giant" had been exposed. Utilizing lateral movement and doing damage with sharp bursts of accurate punches, Chagaev made his 7'2" opponent look ponderous and peripheral, a freak sideshow. But Valuev, 321 1/2, St Petersburg, Russia, revived his career and earned a rematch against Chagaev with a dominating performance against former WBO titleholder Sergei Liakhovich, 251, Scottsdale, Arizona, via Vitebsk, Belarus, winning every round in a WBA eliminator at the Nuremberg (Germany) Arena.

A thudding left jab, which repeatedly penetrated Liakhovich's guard, was the key weapon for Valuev, for his opponent could not get away from it. Nor was he able to offer up anything of consequence in retaliation. Valuev was just too big and awkward, and Liakhovich was unable to follow Chagaev's blueprint. The Giant looked much sharper than he was during his defeat by Chagaev, but Liakhovich lacks the quality of the former world amateur champion, so it remains to be seen if an improved Valuev can avenge his only loss.

From the outset, he put his jab to work, and Liakhovich, 23-3 (14), sustained a cut by his left eye early. There was just no getting away from Valuev's jab, which kept Liakhovich off-balance and undermined his efforts to counter effectively. When Liakhovich tried to move in close in the fourth round, he was nailed by a right-left-right combination. Valuev also mixed in solid bodyshots, demonstrating versatility that was sorely absent when he lost to Chagaev.

Busier than usual, Valuev continued to land jolting jabs through the middle rounds, and three rapid left hooks made Liakhovich give ground in the sixth, a round in which The Giant closed with three strong right crosses. At the end of the seventh round, Liakhovich's trainer, Tommy Brooks, read him the riot act.

"Do you want me to stop it?" he asked his dispirited fighter. "You can't stand in front of the guy. Use your jab and step around him." Liakhovich did fire off a jab, but he got three back along with a short right and a left hook behind it. Liakhovich was too easy to hit and Valuev took advantage.

Each round followed much the same pattern as the one before and, by the final round, it was simply a matter of whether or not Liakhovich would survive until the final bell. This he managed, but John Coyle (England) and Juan Manuel Garcia (Spain) both scored 120-108, and Jean-Louis Legland (France) made it 120-107, all for Valuev. THE RING scored 120-108 for Valuev, 48-1 (34). The referee was Stanley Christodoulou (South Africa).

"We have changed a lot of things and I think I did better than before," said Valuev, who worked with trainer Alexander Zimin for the first time. "I'm looking forward to the fight with Chagaev and we'll see each other soon." (02-16-08)

—Brian Doogan

PHOTO BY TIMM SCHAMBERGER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Valuev seemed slightly improved in victory over Liakhovich

foolish to fight strictly in America for fans that aren't in love with him.

Also of concern are the machinations behind the comeback of Klitschko's older brother, Vitali. The somber Vitali, who was briefly recognized as THE RING's world champion, is negotiating to fight for Peter's alphabet belt. The Klitschko brothers are still clinging to their fantasy of owning every tin-pot title in boxing. This may be amusing for

PHOTO BY IAN WATSON/GETTY IMAGES

A potential roadblock preventing a rematch between Peter and Klitschko is Wladimir's older brother, Vitali, pictured beneath a huge photo of THE RING's number-one heavyweight contender. Even though Vitali has not fought since December 2004, the WBC has made him Peter's mandatory challenger.

Mama Klitschko, but boxing fans that deserve a single champion should be losing patience with the brothers K.

It also makes Wlad sound like he's talking from both sides of his mouth when he says, as he did after beating Ibragimov, "We made this happen and it's great for the sport. The heavyweight division needs an undisputed champion, we need a person to carry this title." Right you are, Wlad. Then, in the same breath, he supports his brother's decision to make a comeback, so they can sit atop the division like the twin sons of Poseidon.

Vitali's alleged comeback may have inadvertently accounted for Wlad's tepid performance in New York. The Klitschko empire is huge, and depends on the success of both brothers. For Wlad to lose now would be a disaster. Hence, the cautious performance. But he may have learned something from the fan reaction. Just as brother Vitali learned when he quit on his stool against Chris Byrd many years ago, caution doesn't win admirers in America. Vitali learned from his public scalding, and came back like a gunslinger before his injury-prone body gave out. Perhaps the sour reaction over the Ibragimov bout will serve as a similar turning point for Wladimir.

If Wladimir and Peter don't fight soon, the best scenario would be for Vitali to come back and get crushed by Peter. In the meantime, Wladimir can fight Valuev or Chagaev for big bucks in Europe, and then he can face Peter in a heavily hyped grudge bout. That way, Vitali makes his comeback, Wladimir makes his money, and boxing gets a heavyweight champion.

What Klitschko and the other heavyweight contenders have to learn is that Americans live vicariously through our athletes. Other countries may appreciate the easy win on points, but Americans are still looking for a champion who climbs into the ring like a berserker and leaves broken bodies behind. At the very least, we want a champion who shows a little passion.

Unfortunately, we may be in for some more of this long winter of the Russian heavyweight. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

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HAYE, EVERYBODY, I'M GOING TO BE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION

Undisputed cruiserweight champion Haye celebrates his crushing second-round knockout of Maccarinelli (right), who was brutally pounded into defeat (above) in a match many had seen as a toss-up going in.

By Brian Doogan

In the South Florida Gym on Collins Avenue, near a parking lot that was once the site of the Fifth Street Gym in Miami Beach, David Haye sat on the ring apron and made a prediction for the benefit of four British newspapermen.

"If Enzo Maccarinelli doesn't raise his game, the fight won't go beyond a minute of the first round," he declared. The writers from the *Daily Star*, *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail,* and the *Sunday Times* duly took note. Half a century ago, just around the block, this kind of projection by another emerging heavyweight was a regular feature of his prefight shtick, but Haye has always modeled himself more on Evander Holyfield than Muhammad Ali, so he issued his warning with scant regard for hype. The 27-year-old

PHOTOS BY CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Londoner was ready to deliver.

Two weeks later, when he stepped into the ring at the O2 Arena in London at 2:20 am local time, Haye's dilated pupils were black as coal, two windows into an unnerving, dark place somewhere deep in his warrior soul. He was as impressive a physical specimen as former cruiserweight and heavyweight king Holyfield, who sat at ringside, was in his prime.

Maccarinelli, an honest professional and a big hitter too, whose improvement under the tutelage of Enzo Calzaghe had convinced enough good judges that the encounter could be defined as almost 50-50, seemed to sense something sinister in the world cruiserweight champion's demeanor. He could sense his confidence and an assassin-like air of detachment. Maccarinelli froze, and Haye focused on the ruthless elimination of his doomed opponent. For some observers, the 5 minutes, 4 seconds of action represented an epiphany.

"I knew nothing about David Haye before this week—I couldn't even have pointed out to you which one he was on the fight poster—but I'm impressed by what I've seen. I like him a lot," declared Holyfield, the only world cruiserweight champion to have moved up and claimed the heavyweight crown. "Power, speed, mental strength, and the ability to execute, Haye has all of these attributes and he's a good age (27). I proved when I went up against bigger guys like Riddick Bowe and Lennox Lewis that it's not really about the weight and being big. It's all about the size of the fighter inside you, and Haye's shown me that he's a fighter. Sure, he can make it as a heavyweight."

At 6'3" and a projected fighting weight of 220 to 230 pounds, Haye has the stature to be a genuine threat at heavyweight, especially when his speed and Adonis-like body are factored into the equation, along with the distinct lack of quality and overall depth in the division. Articulate, charismatic, and accomplished, Haye will be a breath of fresh air in an environment gone stale. His objective is to challenge the hierarchy quickly, engaging perhaps in just one bout, which his trainer and manager, Adam Booth, will try to have recognized as an official eliminator, before challenging for a title. Hanging around at cruiserweight to fight Philadelphia's Steve Cunningham, his only obviously viable challenger, serves no purpose for Haye, for his stated goal has always been to establish himself as the top cruiserweight in the world before launching an assault

PHOTO BY CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Haye fires a range-finding jab at Maccarinelli during their cruiserweight championship fight at London's O2 Arena, where approximately 20,000 enthusiastic fans turned out to witness the battle of British powerpunchers. What many considered a toss-up, turned out to be a rout.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Perhaps awed by the occasion or dazzled by Haye's speed, Maccarinelli, who entered the match as THE RING's fifth-ranked cruiserweight, froze after being tagged, which allowed Haye to fire away with impunity. Haye earned $2-million for 304 seconds of work.

against the heavyweights. Only the $2-million purse that promoter Frank Warren dangled in front of him to fight Maccarinelli, after Haye's championship-winning bout against Jean-Marc Mormeck last November in Paris, delayed his progression. How could he reject that kind of reward for an assignment that he knew would be straightforward and clinical?

"Even if there was a Lennox Lewis up there [at heavyweight], and there isn't, I would still be moving up," Haye revealed in the winner's dressing room, as a small group of family and friends offered congratulations while the sound of soul music reverberated from a stereo in the corner. "The heavyweight division is an absolute disgrace right now, and, if I'm as good as I think I am, I can beat anybody in the world. Wladimir Klitschko's one of the best, but he's vulnerable against smaller guys who punch hard. Corrie Sanders is no bigger than me, but he stopped him in two rounds, and Lamon Brewster (who stopped Klitschko at the end of the fifth round) is definitely no world-beater. Tony Thompson is avoided and he's the best American, while Ruslan Chagaev had that bout of hepatitis and wasn't his usual sharp self against Matt Skelton, and Sultan Ibragimov was unimpressive against Klitschko in an embarrassing fight. Then there's Sam Peter, who got knocked down three times by Jameel McCline and nearly got knocked out. Jameel McCline? Come on. There's nobody out there.

"I would fight Klitschko in my next fight, but he'll try to avoid me like the plague. He won't be looking forward to fighting someone with my style, someone who is powerful, explosive, and could knock him over with any shot. So I'll just work my way up the rankings and he'll be the guy in my sights because he's recognized as the number one. I said I was going to be the number-one cruiserweight in the world and I'm going to be the number-one heavyweight in the world. These were my goals when I turned pro in 2002. I wanted to take the traditional route, Southern Area title, British title, Commonwealth title, European title, and then the world title. If I didn't believe I could meet my own expectations, I wouldn't be doing this. I'm pretty much the same build as Holyfield, and he won the world title at cruiserweight before he was successful in moving up. That's what I aim to do. I'm not going to hang around, because I don't want to be boxing beyond the age of 30. You work out what's more important, your health. You can only roll the dice so many times. Lennox got out at the right time, and I'll look to do it too. That's the success story in boxing. I'd hate to lose a fight because my reflexes have slowed down and I'm not as good as I once was. Lennox got it right, and I'll be the best British heavyweight since Lennox Lewis, trust me."

If Audley Harrison, Michael Sprott, Danny Williams, and Skelton are the men that he needs to be better than, his task is not so difficult. But

he wants more, of course, so it is Peter, Klitschko, and Chagaev whom he needs to knock off. As Holyfield suggested, the potential is there. Haye has prodigious power and a finisher's instinct. His jab is strong, though he could probably utilize it more, and the long, pulverizing right is reminiscent of Lewis. But there are questions about Haye that remain to be answered.

Lolenga Mock, an obscure African super middleweight, knocked him down in Haye's seventh fight and fellow Briton Carl Thompson, in the twilight of his career, stopped him in the fifth round in September 2004, in Haye's only defeat. So it is legitimate to speculate that genuine, hard-hitting heavyweights, such as Klitschko and Peter, could reach his chin and take him out. His stamina, too, is a nagging concern, for he disintegrated completely against Thompson and he has gone 12 rounds only once in a European title fight against Belgium's Ismail Abdoul. How would he fare in a long slog against a 250-pound heavyweight? Will his punches carry the same impact against bigger men? With a devastating right hand, he stopped heavyweight Tomasz Bonin from Poland in the first round in April last year, but he may encounter a greater degree of resistance from more dangerous men.

"Nobody can keep taking my punches for 12 rounds," Haye insisted. "If I'm throwing bombs, you'd have to be superhuman to make it through to the last round with me. As long as I'm hitting someone, no matter if I'm cut and no matter what round it is, sooner or later he won't be able to take it anymore and he'll have to go down. No one can take it, no way.

"Before the Thompson fight, I'd never been out of breath in a fight and since then I haven't had any problems. It's just that one fight. I've not been in a position where I've been tired and couldn't throw the punches that I wanted to throw. The Ismail Abdoul fight I wasn't out of breath and I went 12 rounds. Giacobbe Fragomeni (the Italian from whom he won the European cruiserweight title) went nine rounds and I knocked him out. I had just as much power then. Since that fight there's been no indication that I have a stamina problem, but there's still this perception among certain people, 'If David Haye goes past four rounds, he's in trouble.' But I've gone past four rounds and I've won easy and knocked guys out. I've kept going and they haven't. People who say this about me either don't know too much about boxing or they're hoping that I have problems with my stamina.

"American boxing fans are craving an exciting heavyweight, someone who can really fight and isn't scared to put it on the line. There's an opening

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Haye is a ruthless finisher when he gets his opponent in trouble, and he climbed all over Maccarinelli once he hurt him, hammering away until the Welshman fell through the ropes. The much-anticipated bout was all over in less than two rounds.

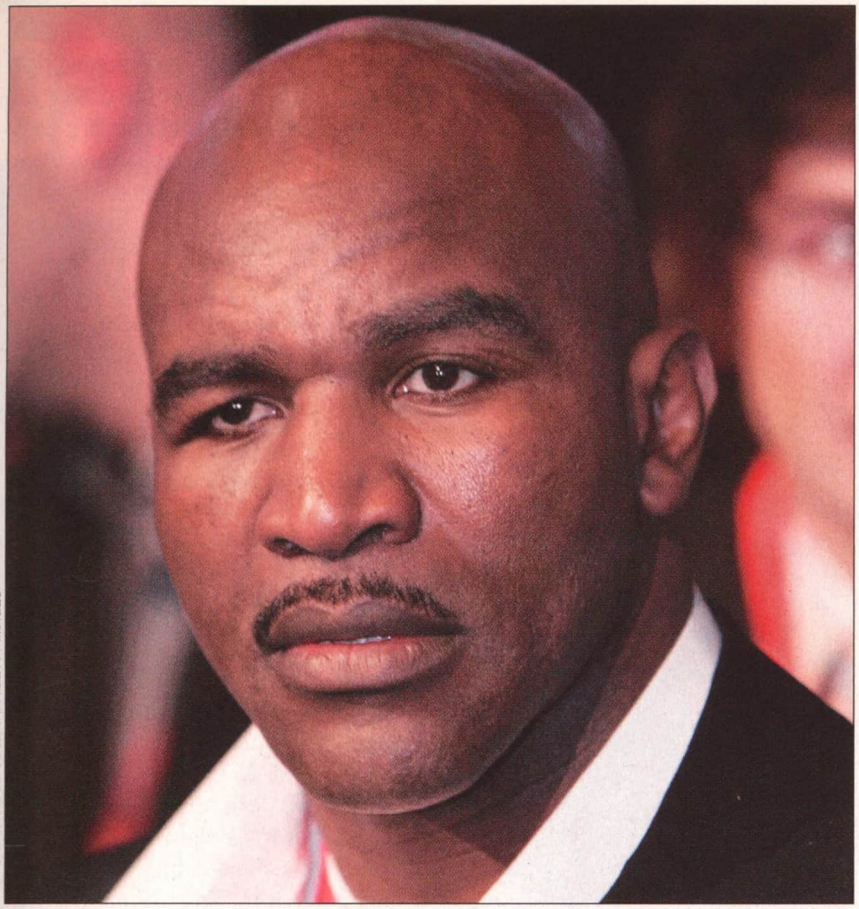

PHOTO BY CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Evander Holyfield, the only cruiserweight champion to move up and win the heavyweight title, was ringside in London for Haye-Maccarinelli, and believes the Englishman has what it takes to follow in "The Real Deal's" illustrious footsteps.

in the division, and I'm that man. People aren't 100 percent sure I'm good enough. There is a little doubt at the back of their minds that I might go over, but this is what makes it more exciting. That's why there were 20,000 people here tonight, because not everyone is sure about me and they thought that Maccarinelli and me might be competitive. If they keep turning up in those numbers, whether they doubt me or not, I won't be complaining."

Some refinement of his style will surely be in order, however, against bigger and heavier opponents. Haye and Booth have been together since the ascendant cruiserweight king was an amateur in which he reached his pinnacle by winning a silver medal at the 2001 World Championships in Belfast. Their approach is scientific and closely guarded, but Booth did disclose that Haye will allow his body to readjust after nine months of solid training for the back-to-back encounters with Mormeck and Maccarinelli, and his next outing will be in November. Former world heavyweight champion Hasim Rahman, who was being lined up before the Maccarinelli match was made, remains on their radar, as is Oliver McCall, a one-time titleholder.

"People believe that David has that ability to do something at heavyweight and, to be honest, Maccarinelli might have been more dangerous than a lot of heavyweight opponents that he'll fight," said Booth. "Enzo had quick shots and he can whack, and the combination of hand speed and power made him dangerous. But David has immense self-belief. People see a good-looking fellow with a flash attitude who enjoys life, and they automatically want to say that he's a playboy. Critics say that he's got a low left hand, he likes it all his own way, he's a puncher and he doesn't like getting hit back. Hey, not many fighters do. But people are missing the point. He does hit hard and he's genetically gifted, but he has the biggest bollocks of any fighter I have ever known. He genuinely

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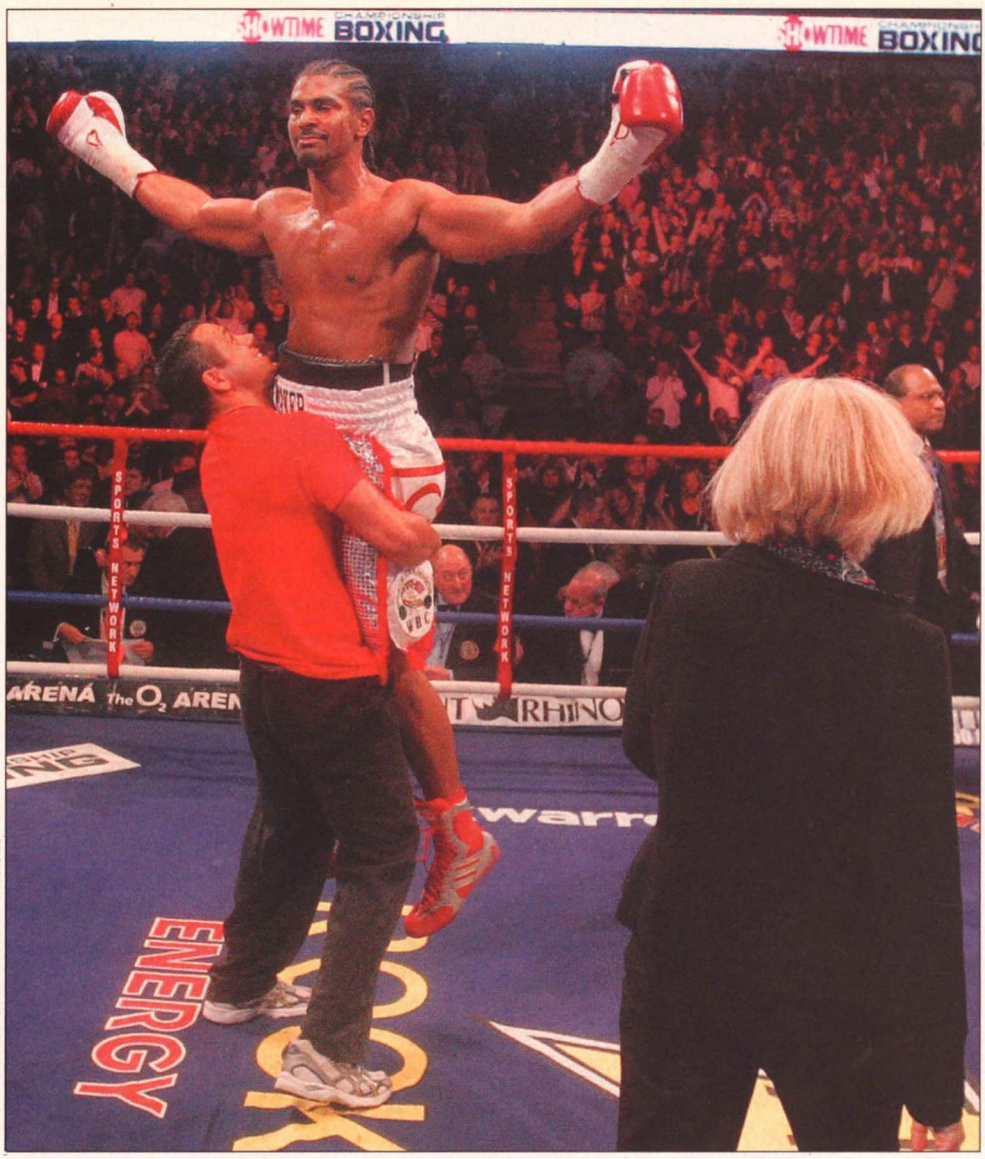

PHOTO BY CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Manager Adam Booth hoists Haye aloft moments after the fight was stopped. The two have been together since Haye's amateur days, and Booth is confident his man has what it takes to make his heavyweight campaign a great success.

thrives on the danger. Whenever I've seen him hurt in a fight or in sparring, he will always get up or stand there and look for a knockout shot when he's hurt, the same as Nigel Benn. Mormeck put him down, and not once did he doubt that he was going to knock him out. He said it was the most surreal feeling that he has ever had. He was down; he looked at me and said he was fine. He knew his legs had gone, but his head was clear and he said that he never once doubted that he was going to win by knockout.

"David's not a perfect fighter. There are things he doesn't do, but Ali wasn't a good bodypuncher, and it didn't stop him from being Ali. Roberto Duran wasn't great on the back foot or skipping round people, but he was one of the greatest fighters who ever lived. There are things that David doesn't do, but when it comes to a world-class jab and a world-class right hand and his ability to land those two shots, you could say that he's the best cruiserweight there's ever been with those shots. Holyfield is the best cruiserweight, but I'm thinking of specific skills. David has what I call grade [genuine class], and that makes him the real thing."

Haye lost his balance early after Maccarinelli, 197, Swansea, Wales, connected with a left hook, but almost immediately he was stalking his opponent and probing for openings to land his big punches. A left hook whizzed by the Welshman's chin before Haye, 198, Bermondsey (a borough of Greater London), missed with his vaunted right hand. Twice he drove his right into Maccarinelli's body, but despite both men's bad intentions, no real damage was inflicted, though Haye edged the round.

The large crowd created a vibrant atmosphere, and the majority was behind Haye, who grew up just a few miles from the arena. When blood began to drip from a cut by the corner of his left eye, he was resolved to "closing the show," and the crowd suddenly sensed it.

A roar went up when a hard right hand cracked into Maccarinelli's jaw. The challenger took the punch, but gave out clear signals that he was hurt. Quickly, Haye, 21-1 (20), followed up with two left hooks to the body before a right hand wobbled Maccarinelli badly in a neutral corner. The Swansea man kept himself up by using the ropes, and referee John Keane should probably have stepped in and issued a count, but Haye kept punching, driving in a vicious two-fisted assault before a final overhand right put Maccarinelli, 28-2 (21), down and through the ropes. He rose to his feet, but his legs betrayed him as he reeled around the ring, almost clattering into Keane. The referee completed the mandatory eight-count and, rightly, waved the fight over at 2:04 of the second round.

"Enzo didn't perform, so I would have to reserve judgment as to how far Haye will go as a heavyweight," cautioned Enzo Calzaghe. "Remember, Enzo only weighed 199 pounds when he got in the ring, not 240 or 250. That's what Klitschko will weigh and he's top drawer, so it's going to be a different proposition."■

Brian Doogan, THE RING's European correspondent, was ringside in London for the Haye-Maccarinelli fight.

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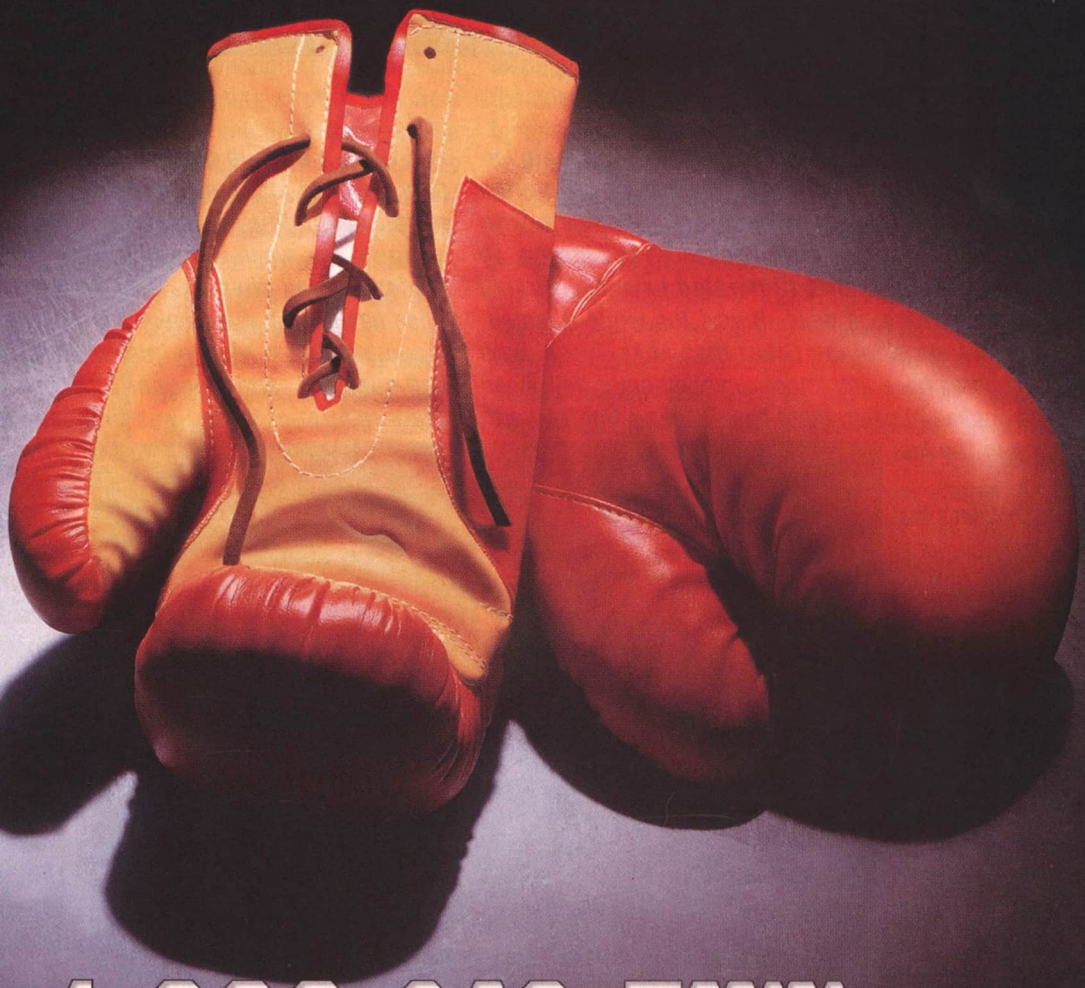

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OUR EXCLUSIVE ANNUAL REPORT

THE STATE OF THE GAME

By Eric Raskin

Oh well, we gave it a shot, boxing fans, but it's over. Mixed martial arts has completely driven us into the ground—how did we ever expect to compete with the thrill of watching an armbar applied?—and boxing, as those wise sages at ***Sports Illustrated*** *have been trying to warn us for years, is dead. It was fun while it lasted, but who were we kidding? Other than Mike Tyson, who could still come back and knock anybody out if he trained hard and applied himself, there hasn't been a fighter worth watching in the last 20 years.*

What? What's that you say? You say there was a fight last year that attracted 2.4 million pay-per-view buys, generated about $150-million, and made it so that two boxers ended up among the top three highest paid athletes of 2007? And you say that there are several 130-pound fighters, none of whom are American, who draw close to 400,000 PPV buys every time they fight each other, even though supposedly nobody cares about the little guys? And you say 50,000 people bought tickets for a fight in Wales between a couple of guys no SportsCenter anchor other than Brian Kenny has ever heard of? And you say in a span of 12 months, a pair of 122-pounders from Mexico put on arguably the greatest trilogy in the entire history of boxing? And you say there's a Puerto Rican kid who just about sells out the Garden every time he fights there, and there's a white guy from Ohio who inspired 5,000 fans to make an eight-hour drive to watch him win the middleweight title?

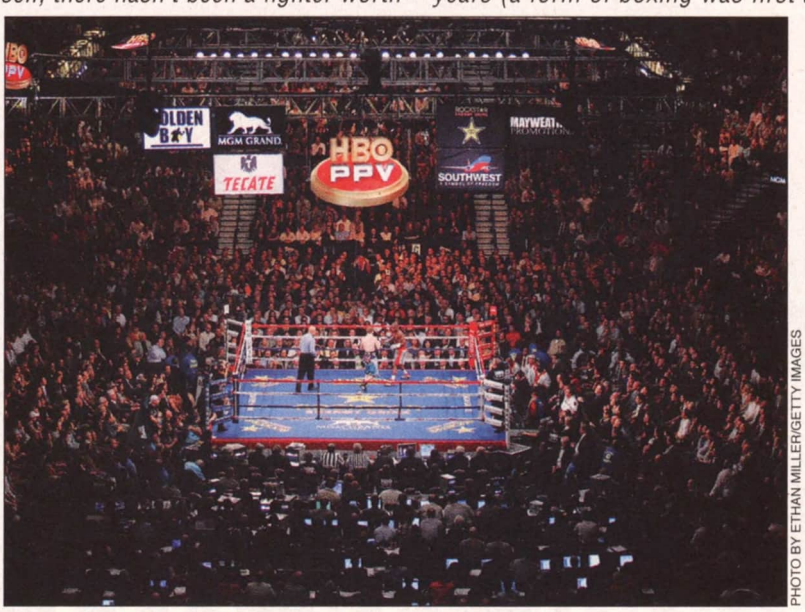


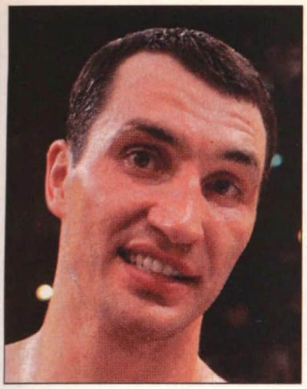
PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Packed arenas are becoming a familiar sight

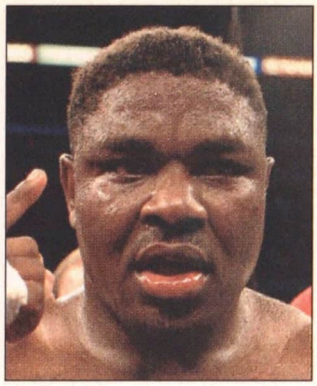
You know, when you add it all up, it doesn't sound like boxing is dead after all. There is life after Tyson. Kimbo Slice hasn't won over every last person looking to watch a combat sport. Maybe, just maybe, a great sport that has survived, and frequently thrived, for about 2,700 years (a form of boxing was first accepted as an Olympic sport in 688 B.C.), isn't going to wither and die just because the heavyweight division is in a lull and because MMA is being promoted intelligently and aggressively. Sorry, ***Sports Illustrated****, on second thought, you guys still don't have a clue.*

Before we dive into this massive annual roundup of every division in boxing, a couple of quick notes about the little divisional sidebars. First, when we declare who "Deserves A Title Shot," what we're talking about depends on whether there's a RING *champion. If there is, then everyone but the champ is eligible; if there isn't, then the focus is on guys who don't possess an alphabet belt. And second, there's a new category this year: "Most Avoided." This can refer either to fighters who are currently being ducked, or fighters who we suspect are about to start being ducked.*

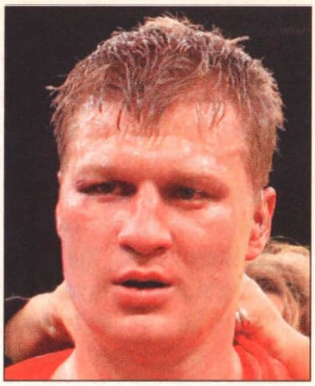
(Note: This section is based on results through March 22, 2008.)



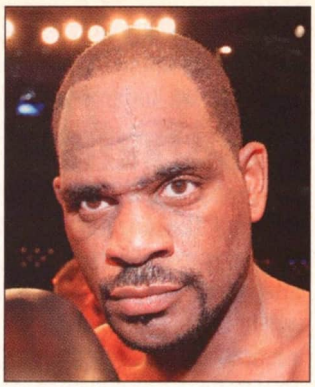
Wladimir Klitschko



Sam Peter



Alexander Povetkin



Tony Thompson

HEAVYWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Wladimir Klitschko

BEST BOXER
Wladimir Klitschko

MOST PROTECTED
Tye Fields

MOST AVOIDED
Tony Thompson

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Tony Tubbs

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Wladimir Klitschko-Samuel Peter II

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Nicolay Valuev

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Chris Arreola

ON THE WAY UP
Chris Arreola

ON THE WAY DOWN
Hasim Rahman

BEST FIGHT IN 2007
Samuel Peter W 12
Jameel McCline

HEAVYWEIGHT

The current state of the heavyweight division can be reasonably summed up in four words: Damn you, **Vitali Klitschko**.

When we really needed the elder Klitschko brother to keep the sport's most prominent division afloat, his body betrayed him and he left the weight class without a leader; now he's making a comeback (as long as his body stops betraying him long enough to get through a training camp), and he's gumming up the works. The only fight that really matters in the division is **Wladimir Klitschko** vs. **Sam Peter** II, and thanks to Vitali, it isn't happening now and may never happen.

Wladimir may have bored us senseless against **Sultan Ibragimov** in February, but he is clearly the world's top heavyweight right now. Peter may still be a clubbing brute whose skills can only be deemed "improved" because it would be impossible to go in the other direction, but he's clearly the number-two man at the weight. "Dr. Steelhammer" and "The Nigerian Nightmare" fought in September '05, and Klitschko won a close, entertaining (if highly sloppy) battle in which he rose from the deck three times and won pretty much every round in which he wasn't kissing the canvas. A rematch would crown a RING champion. It wouldn't solve all of the division's ills, but it would be a *major* step in the right direction. And Vitali, in conjunction with the WBC, which gave him a "Go Directly To A Title Shot" card when he retired, is standing in the way. As we went to press, negotiations for a Peter-Vitali fight were underway, and if Vitali should win, it may be years before we see an undisputed champion, because the Klitschko brothers refuse to fight one another.

That's what's happening at the very top of the division. What's happening on the next tier shows you just how much impact the dissolution of the Soviet Union has had on this weight class. Uzbekistan's **Ruslan Chagaev** and Russia's **Alexander Povetkin** are both in their 20s and undefeated, with Olympic pedigrees. Russian **Nicolay Valuev** is the largest heavyweight titlist ever, and for a guy seven feet tall and 320 pounds, he can actually box a little bit. The shine came off both Russia's Ibragimov and Uzbekistan's **Oleg Maskaev** in their recent defeats to Wlad Klitschko and Peter, respectively, but both can settle into roles as competent gatekeepers. And a pair of Ukrainians, **Vladimir Virchis** (whose only loss was a majority decision to Chagaev) and **Alexander Dimitrenko** (who is 25 years old an unbeaten in 27 fights), are lurking on the fringes of contention.

Shifting away from the former U.S.S.R., there are four Americans worth mentioning: capable southpaw **Tony Thompson**, veterans **John Ruiz** and **Hasim Rahman**, and up-and-coming slugger **Chris Arreola**. And from across the pond comes the division's most intriguing wild card: cruiser champ **David Haye**, who's looking to follow **Evander Holyfield**'s lead and prove that great heavyweights can be built from cruiserweight frames.

Think About It: Assuming the Peter-Vitali Klitschko fight does come off, it wouldn't mark the first time a former heavyweight champ came out of retirement and immediately challenged for a title with no tuneups. James J. Jeffries was inactive for 71 months when he came back and got slaughtered by Jack Johnson in 1910. Joe Louis was out of the game for 27 months before coming back and losing a lopsided decision to Ezzard Charles in 1950. Muhammad Ali enjoyed a 25-month retirement before Larry Holmes TKO'd him in 1980. And Holmes himself quit the sport for 21 months before returning and getting dusted by Mike Tyson in '88. Obviously, for Vitali, the precedent is not encouraging. But Klitschko, unlike those listed above, is not fighting the man viewed as the division's top dog. The question is whether, after a layoff of 40-some-odd months by the time he gets back in the ring, he can beat the man ranked number two. If he can, he will have defied

the historical trend, even if the accomplishment gets an asterisk next to it.

CRUISERWEIGHT

By now, we'd like to believe all the cruiserweight bashing is over. All the pundits categorizing this as a "bastard" weight class, everyone talking trash about how there aren't any good fighters here at "junior heavyweight"—enough already. For a while, the criticism was warranted. For about a decade following Evander Holyfield's departure in the late-'80s, it was fair to denigrate the division. But things started to change with the emergence of Vassiliy Jirov, **Wayne Braithwaite**, Juan Carlos Gomez, and **Jean-Marc Mormeck** around the turn of the millennium, and over the past few years, this has actually been one of the sport's most consistently interesting and entertaining divisions. And it should be no surprise, really; these guys are the same size as many of the thrilling heavyweight greats of the old days, champs like Dempsey, Louis, and Marciano.

When it comes to "interesting" and "entertaining," reigning 200-pound champ **David Haye** certainly fits the bill. With a physique borrowed from Schwarzenegger, a punch/chin combo borrowed from Shavers, and a mouth borrowed from Hamed, "The Hayemaker's" fights are can't-miss events. He climbed off the deck to stop Mormeck for the title last November, and he needed just two rounds to crush Welshman **Enzo Maccarinelli** in a massive British showdown in March. Haye is everything you could want in a champion.

The bad news: He'll probably never fight at this weight again.

The good news: Even as Haye pursues his heavyweight dreams, there are plenty of other fighters here to keep us interested, as long as the pay-cable networks take notice and start showing them.

At the head of the class is Philadelphia's **Steve Cunningham**, who's been a willing and successful road warrior in recent years, outboxing **Krzysztof Wlodarczyk** in Poland and **Marco Huck** in Germany. Ex-champs Mormeck and **O'Neil Bell** lurk directly below in the rankings, a pair of exciting veterans who may be able to rise to the top again with Haye out of the way.

In the middle of the rankings is a cluster of credible Europeans, including Wlodarczyk, Huck, Maccarinelli, **Vadim Tokarev**, and **Firat Arslan**. But more intriguing are the names at the bottom of the top 10, unbeatens like **Rudolf Kraj** and **Johnathon Banks**. With fellow up-and-comers like **B.J. Flores** (a bit defensive for our tastes, but marketable nonetheless), Cuban defector **Yoan Hernandez**, **Matt Godfrey** (who recently lost a close decision to Kraj), and the explosive **Eric Fields**, the cruiserweight division isn't in danger of dying when Haye departs.

Think About It: Want to know what made Haye's fight with Maccarinelli so unique? Though Haye's RING cruiserweight title reign is the fourth since the re-introduction of RING championships, this marked the first time the title had been defended successfully. Mormeck won the vacant belt against Braithwaite and lost it to Bell in his first defense, Bell lost it back to Mormeck in his first defense, and then Mormeck lost it to Haye in his very next fight. With this in mind, Haye has our blessing to vacate the title and move on up to heavyweight; after all, he's already had a distinguished reign at cruiser, relatively speaking.

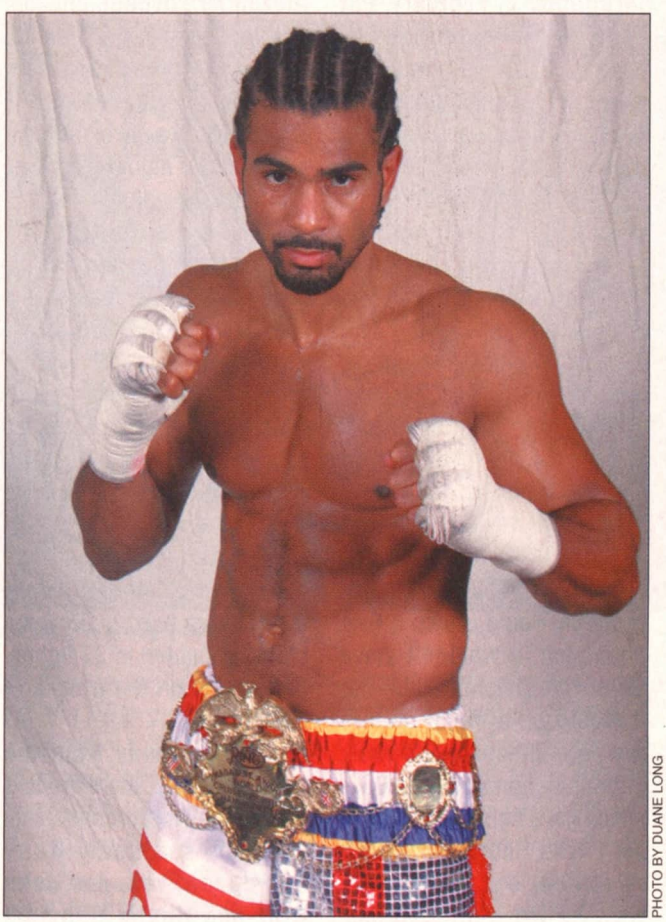


PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

Cruiserweight champ David Haye plans to move up to heavyweight

CRUISERWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
David Haye

BEST BOXER
Steve Cunningham

MOST PROTECTED
Johny Jensen

MOST AVOIDED
Rudolf Kraj

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Herbie Hide

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
David Haye-O'Neil Bell

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Steve Cunningham

MOST FUN TO WATCH
David Haye

ON THE WAY UP
Eric Fields

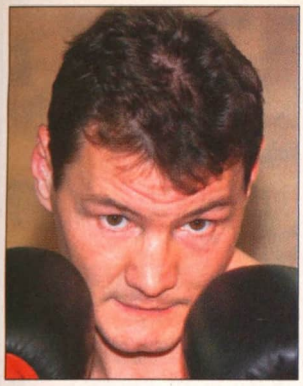
ON THE WAY DOWN
Felix Cora Jr.

BEST FIGHT IN 2007
Jean-Marc Mormeck
W 12 O'Neil Bell

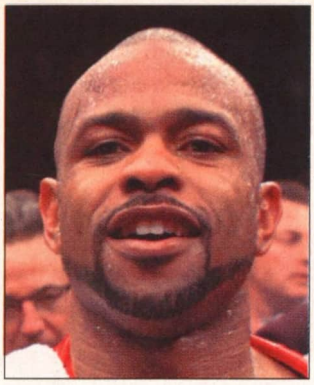
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

Bernard Hopkins vs. **Joe Calzaghe**. **Chad Dawson** vs. **Glen Johnson**. **Antonio Tarver** vs. **Clinton Woods**. Over an eight-day span in April, five of the six top fighters in the light heavyweight division, plus the super middleweight champion of the world, were slated to step into the ring in three outstanding matches. Incredibly, not a single one of those attractive fights was scheduled for pay-per-view.

Naturally, this is wonderful news for the health of and



Zsolt Erdei



Roy Jones

interest in the 175-pound weight class. Unfortunately, the timing was not so wonderful for this magazine, as we didn't know any of the results of these fights as we went to press. Such is life. But know this much: Whoever prevails in Hopkins-Calzaghe is the man to beat in the division, and whoever wins the Dawson-Johnson and Tarver-Woods matchups would make a fantastically deserving challenger for THE RING title.

In addition to those six fighters who are taking on the best possible competition, there are two others in the weight class worth mentioning: **Zsolt Erdei** and **Roy Jones**. Erdei is recognized by some as the "linear" champion (it goes back to Virgil Hill unifying two belts in 1996), but taking on **Danny Santiago**, **George Blades**, and **Tito Mendoza** in succession is no way to strengthen your claim. Sure, the purist in us would like to see Erdei face THE RING champ just to get everybody on the same page. But the marketplace ultimately dictates which fights happen at the highest levels, and Erdei's name means absolutely nothing outside of Germany and Hungary.

Jones, meanwhile, remains one of the sport's biggest names, and the surprising 500,000 PPV buys generated by his January '08 victory over Felix Trinidad suggests he can still sell with the right opponent. In his prime, he was often reluctant to face the most compelling opponents. At age 39 and with a lot to prove about how good a fighter he still is, he seems more open to testing himself. So we may see Jones challenging for THE RING title one more time before it's all over, deserving of the opportunity or not.

A few quick notes about the sidebar on this division: First off, because he hadn't yet fought at 175 as of our press deadline, Calzaghe was excluded from consideration for "Best Puncher" of "Best Boxer." Second, "Most Avoided" was a tossup between Johnson and Dawson, and just because they agreed to fight each other doesn't change the fact that almost everyone else seems to be steering clear of them. And third, it just wouldn't be reasonable to say who most "Deserves A Title Shot" before Johnson-Dawson is over, so we copped out somewhat on that one.

Think About It: Julio Gonzalez is not going to be remembered as a great fighter. In fact, he's been just middle-of-the-road enough that he may not be remembered at all a generation from now. But his name will linger on thanks to the fact that he's on the record of just about every light heavyweight of this era who *will* be remembered. After he made a name for himself in a spectacularly thrilling win over Julian Letterlough in '01, he

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Antonio Tarver

BEST BOXER
Bernard Hopkins

MOST PROTECTED
Zsolt Erdei

MOST AVOIDED
Glen Johnson

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Peter Venancio

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Joe Calzaghe-
Roy Jones

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Johnson/Dawson winner

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Adrian Diaconu

ON THE WAY UP
Tavoris Cloud

ON THE WAY DOWN
Montell Griffin

BEST FIGHT IN 2007
Antonio Tarver W 12
Elvir Muriqi

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Verbal sparring between Bernard Hopkins and Joe Calzaghe

fought Jones, Glen Johnson, Dariusz Michalczewski, Erdei, Montell Griffin, Woods twice, and Reggie Johnson. His record in those bouts: a decidedly middle-of-the-road 3-5.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT

The super middleweight division is in something of a "where do we go from here?" phase. We got precisely what we wanted: for **Joe Calzaghe** to finally face the best possible opponents, and after dominating **Jeff Lacy**, he was similarly brilliant against **Mikkel Kessler**. In a span of three fights (he also dispatched **Peter Manfredo** in three rounds in between), Calzaghe cleaned out the division. And the result is that there aren't any particularly intriguing fights remaining for him within the weight class.

That probably explains why he was set as of press time to challenge light heavyweight champ **Bernard Hopkins**, and whether successful there or not, the next most appealing bout for him might be against middleweight king Kelly Pavlik. Calzaghe against another super middleweight contender? Sorry, but there's nothing left to settle there.

If Calzaghe exits the division and vacates the championship—certainly a possibility, especially if he takes Hopkins' 175-pound crown—then it busts 168 wide open, and as far as good fighters who are threats to rule a Calzaghe-less division, there are plenty. The leading contender is Kessler, who was competitive throughout against the undefeated champ last November, and if the title becomes vacant, you can't crown a new champ without going through the Dane.

There are a few promising unbeatens: Canada-based

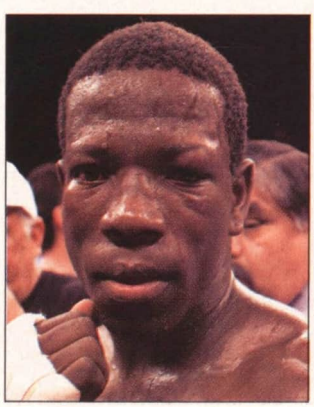
PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Mikkel Kessler drives a left into Joe Calzaghe's head

Romanian **Lucian Bute**, who strikes us as a poor man's Calzaghe (that's meant as a compliment, by the way), and England's **Carl Froch** and Russia's **Denis Inkin**, who were scheduled to meet each other just after this magazine went to press. There are also one-loss fighters aplenty: Lacy (who appears not to be the same fighter since taking a beating from Calzaghe), the tough but limited **Librado Andrade**, and powerpunching **Allan Green**. Speaking of powerpunchers, you have to consider **Edison Miranda** a factor, especially since he's the guy who hung Green's lone defeat on him.

Rounding out the top 10 are sturdy vet **Anthony Mundine**, *Contender 3* champ **Sakio Bika** (who gave Calzaghe and Bute decent tussles before becoming a reality-TV star), and former middleweight king **Jermain Taylor**. Based on how he carried the extra weight in his rematch with Pavlik, we'd say Taylor is a threat to anyone at 168.

Well, anyone except Calzaghe. Like we said, we're done believing there are other super middleweights who can beat him.



Edison Miranda

Carl Froch

Think About It: Here's what we find most interesting about **Sven Ottke** ending a four-year retirement to take on **Dariusz Michalczewski** on May 24: If Ottke wants to keep himself in the hunt for Hall of Fame induction, his perfect record—34-0 (6)—is all he has going for him. He never fought on U.S. TV, never fought outside Germany or Austria, and of the 22 "title" fights that he won, *seven* of them are considered controversial. That's an awful lot. And that's why he's probably unworthy of induction in Canastota. But the whole "retiring undefeated" thing gives him a chance. If Ottke loses at any point in this comeback (he's 40 years old, by the way),

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Edison Miranda

BEST BOXER
Joe Calzaghe

MOST PROTECTED
Andre Ward

MOST AVOIDED
Jean-Paul Mendy

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Raul Marquez

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Joe Calzaghe-
Kelly Pavlik

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Mikkel Kessler

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Edison Miranda

ON THE WAY UP
James McGirt Jr.

ON THE WAY DOWN
Victor Oganov

BEST FIGHT IN 2007
Sakio Bika KO 8
Jaidon Codrington

he can pretty well kiss his HOF hopes goodbye. Sort of the way Michalczewski had to when he lost his undefeated record.

MIDDLEWEIGHT

Nothing against Bernard Hopkins, who was a great middleweight champion (quite possibly one of the five greatest of all-time), but the current champ, **Kelly Pavlik**, has something Hopkins did not, especially over the latter half of his reign: an entertaining style. In fact, entertaining is too understated a word. Pavlik is often thrilling. His crunching power, willingness to get hit (a little too much willingness in round two of his first fight with Jermain Taylor), and burning desire to win have made him one of the sport's must-see attractions. Even at his peak, Hopkins was a fighter whom fans could sometimes afford to miss. Not so with Pavlik, at least not so far, which means the 160-pound division is in very good hands.

And it would've remained in those good hands at least until late in the year if Pavlik's first title defense had come against **John Duddy**, a dream opponent if ever there was one. The handsome Irishman draws a crowd, he's undefeated, he makes for good action, and he's at least two or three or 17 levels below Pavlik in talent. Unfortunately for Pavlik, Duddy suffered a nasty cut in a tough majority decision win over **Walid Smichet** in February, blowing the fight. So Pavlik will now defend against Wales' **Gary Lockett** in Atlantic City June 7. Lockett figures to be a bit more difficult than face-first Duddy, but not a serious threat. There are, however, a couple of challengers who can push the champ.

One is **Arthur Abraham**, who's already being talked about for a fight with Pavlik late in '08. Abraham is undefeated, gutsy (he toughed out a broken jaw to win a somewhat controversial decision over Edison Miranda in '06), and can punch almost as hard as "The Ghost." His worthiness is somewhat in question—his most meaningful wins have come against Miranda, undersized **Kofi Jantuah**, and a fading **Howard Eastman**—but it's no worse a resume than what Pavlik had accumulated when he challenged Taylor.

Perhaps slightly more deserving of a crack at Pavlik is **Winky Wright**, who was unlucky to end up with a draw against Taylor in '06, then shut out **Ike Quartey**, then lost narrowly to Bernard Hopkins fighting two weight classes too high.

MIDDLEWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Kelly Pavlik

BEST BOXER
Winky Wright

MOST PROTECTED
Giovanni Lorenzo

MOST AVOIDED
Winky Wright

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Joe Hutchinson

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Kelly Pavlik-
Arthur Abraham

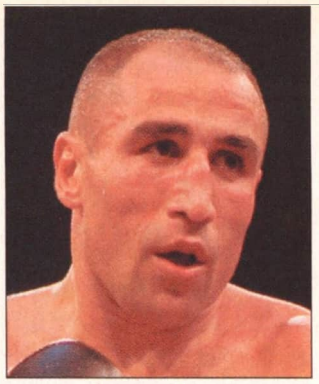
DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Winky Wright

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Kelly Pavlik

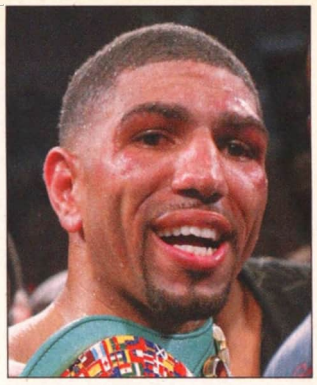
ON THE WAY UP
Joe Greene

ON THE WAY DOWN
Jose Luis Zertuche

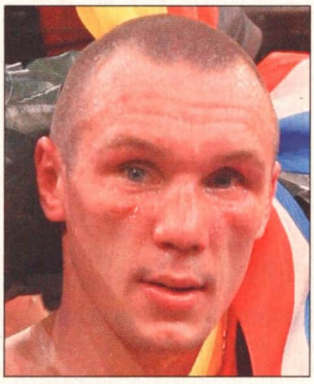
BEST FIGHT IN 2007
Kelly Pavlik KO 7
Jermain Taylor



Arthur Abraham



Winky Wright



Sebastian Sylvester

It wouldn't kill the Winkster to get his stubborn ass back in the ring and remind people why he deserves a title shot, but for our money, he just may be the toughest challenge for Pavlik regardless of his recent activity levels.

Beyond that, the division is packed with solid filler, the sort of fighters who know their way around the ring and aren't embarrassing to have in the top 10, but who are all a cut below the Pavlik-Wright-Abraham crowd. **Javier Castillejo** and **Sebastian Sylvester** were slated to meet after our press deadline, while **Felix Sturm** and **Randy Griffin** can probably be expected to meet again sometime soon, given the entertaining nature of their October '07 split draw. **Amin Asikainen** is Finnish but not necessarily finished after his kayo loss to Sylvester, while **Raymond Joval** and **David Lopez** are classic gatekeepers. The wild card: **Sergio Mora**, who, like Wright, has some self-management issues, but is well known enough to get an opportunity sooner or later.

Think About It: Though the Boxing Writers Association of America named Pavlik-Taylor I

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Kelly Pavlik splits Jermain Taylor's guard with a jab

the Fight of the Year for 2007, THE RING did not—because, well, THE RING editors realized Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez II was a better fight, whereas half of the BWAA members probably couldn't name an active fighter below 130 pounds. Historically, though, THE RING has had no problem naming middleweight fights as Fight of the Year. Incredibly, the 160-pound division has produced 14 of them in the 63 years that the award has existed, a staggering 22 percent rate. However, because THE RING didn't give the award to Pavlik-Taylor, that extends the division's current dry spell to 13 years. The last middleweight fight to capture the honor was Jorge Castro-John David Jackson in '94.

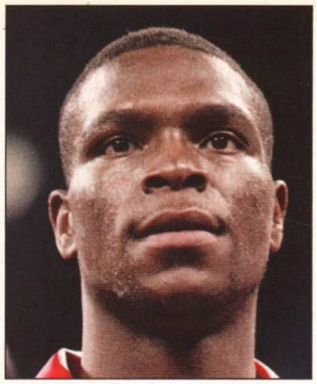
JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT

As a general rule, **Winky Wright** leaving a division isn't such a bad thing, as he can be dull to watch and not everyone is dying to fight him. But since Winky left the 154-pound class in '06 to challenge for the middleweight title, this division has been decidedly rudderless. You want to know how topsy-turvy it's been? In the last year alone, **Roman Karmazin**, **Kassim Ouma**, and **Travis Simms** have all lost in huge upsets, and they were all guys who, a year ago, probably could have made a case for themselves as the division's best fighter.

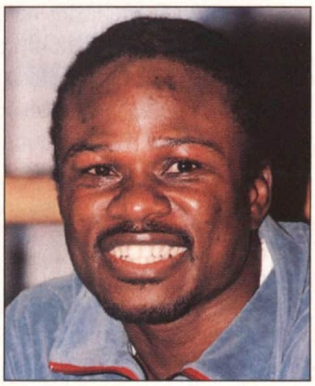
So who is the division's best? It certainly isn't Karmazin (who got drilled by **Alex Bunema**), Ouma (who lost journeyman **Saul Roman**), or Simms (who dropped a snoozer to **Joachim Alcine**). Almost by default, you have to rank **Cory Spinks** first, just by virtue of a close win over Karmazin, an undefeated slate at 154, and a close loss to Jermain Taylor for the undisputed middleweight title. But is Spinks the division's *best*? That's awfully debatable.

There's an argument in favor of **Vernon Forrest**, who's revived his career with a controversial win over **Ike Quartey** and a dominant win over **Carlos Baldomir**. They aren't exactly Canastota-clinching victories, but given the state of the rest of the division, they're worth a little something.

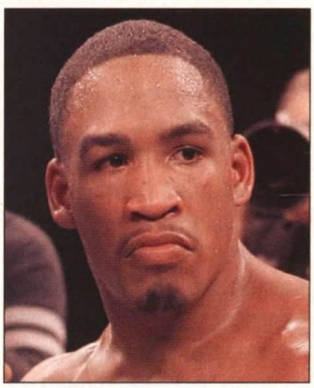
The best might actually be **Oscar De La Hoya**, who kept things competitive against pound-for-pound king Floyd Mayweather last year. But is "The Golden Boy" really even a junior middleweight? He keeps fighting at catchweights, keeps saying he may drop down to welter. He really isn't a factor here because there's no way in hell he's fighting guys like Spinks or Forrest, both of whom are stylistic cancers with no financial value.



Cory Spinks



Vernon Forrest



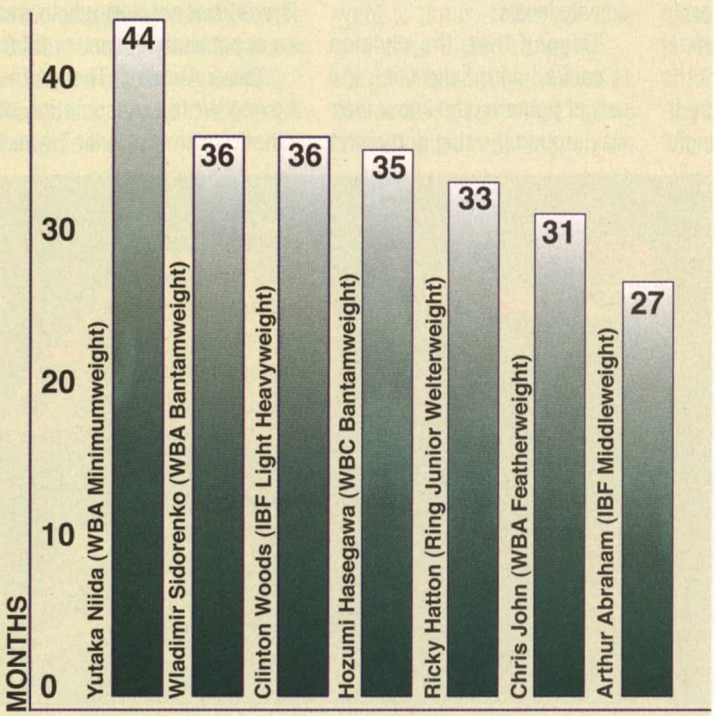
James Kirkland

As for the rest of the division, Bunema has no track record for success at the top level, Alcine has potential but was brutally boring against Simms, **Sergei Dzindziruk** appears talented but only fights in Europe, and **Sergio Martinez** has a lot to offer, but you've never seen a 32-year-old, 43-fight veteran matched softer than the Argentine has been the last three years. In fact, his most recent fight was a *four-rounder*.

Think About It: Last we checked, Zab Judah isn't

LONGEST REIGNING TITLISTS

The graph below illustrates the game's most established titlists (RING, WBC, WBA, or IBF), along with the number of consecutive months each has held the title. Four of last year's top five, Pongsaklek Wonjongkam, Juan Diaz, Muhammad Rachman, and Mikkel Kessler, have been dethroned, leaving a titlist of less than four years on top as the current king of longevity. (Since WBO reigns are excluded, and Joe Calzaghe's RING reign is only 24 months old, he doesn't make the cut.) What does it all mean? It means that the best fighters tend not to stay put in one division for very long, and it means that many of the best fighters are taking risks by facing excellent competition and getting upended. Sadly, some of those who are disinclined to face serious competition are the ones who find themselves on this list, having extended their reigns by playing it as safe as possible.



asking us for advice, but you know what we'd tell him if he was? "Come on up to junior middle." At welter, Judah is a steppingstone for the elite, and his career is going nowhere. At junior middle, even though he'd be undersized, he could get right back on track. We know he matches up well with Spinks, and we know that fight would sell tickets in St. Louis. If Judah beats Spinks, suddenly the Brooklyn veteran (wow, when did Zab Judah become a veteran?) has a belt and is probably ranked number one by THE RING at 154. Maybe he could follow that up by avenging his loss to Baldomir, who sure looks like a spent bullet. Don't those options make more sense for Judah right now than losing to Shane Mosley or fighting stiffs on ESPN2?

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
James Kirkland

BEST BOXER
Vernon Forrest

MOST PROTECTED
Sergio Martinez

MOST AVOIDED
Travis Simms

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Vince Phillips

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Oscar De La Hoya-Miguel Cotto

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Alex Bunema

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Jamie Moore

ON THE WAY UP
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.

ON THE WAY DOWN
Carlos Baldomir

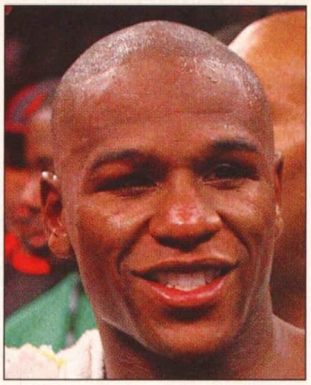
BEST FIGHT IN 2007
James Kirkland KO 1 Allen Conyers

WELTERWEIGHT

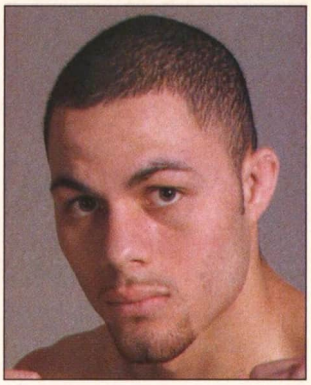
If gray is the new black, and Macau is the new Vegas, then welterweight is the new heavyweight. All that nonsense about "as the heavyweight division goes, so goes boxing" is just that—nonsense. But it's true that casual fans like to have one hot, star-studded division to focus on, and right now, that's welterweight. It's clearly boxing's current glamour division.

What more could you want than to have the pound-for-pound king (and arguably boxing's second most bankable star) as champion, one of boxing's most exciting fighters as his undefeated number-one contender, and a seemingly unending list of recognizable names underneath that includes a perfect mix of veterans and youngsters, of boxers and punchers, of guys who are willing to take risks, suffer losses, and bounce right back? Max Kellerman recently observed that aside from maybe featherweight around 2000-'01, this is the deepest division in at least 10 years.

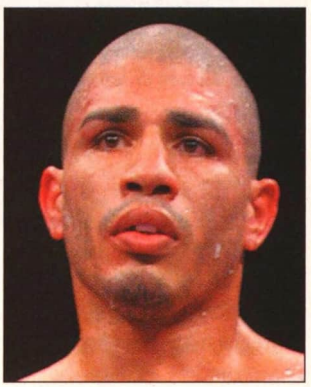
And it's also amazingly easy to rank, at least in the upper half. If you know anything about title lineage, you know that **Floyd Mayweather** is the champ. Clearly, **Miguel Cotto**, whose welterweight campaign includes wins over **Carlos Quintana**, **Zab Judah**, and **Shane Mosley**, is his top contender. Mosley, who lost to Cotto by only the narrowest of margins, has to come next, followed by Quintana, who didn't do half as well against Cotto as Mosley did. But Quintana beat **Paul Williams**, so "Indio" ranks as the number-three contender, followed by Williams, then the man Williams beat to win his alphabet belt, **Antonio Margarito**. Going by who beat whom and how convincing the wins were, is there any other conceivable way to rank these guys?



Floyd Mayweather



Kermit Cintron



Miguel Cotto

It gets fuzzier after that, as Judah is something of a wild card, and the purest puncher in the division, **Kermit Cintron**, could move way up or way down after his rematch with Margarito. **Luis Collazo** is a classic slick southpaw, **Joshua Clottey** a multifaceted pressure fighter, and both could pull the upset on anyone from Quintana on down.

To top it all off, the division has a resoundingly popular reality-TV star (**Alfonso Gomez**) and one of the hottest prospects in the game (**Andre Berto**).

Now tell us again, why is Mayweather fighting junior welterweights and junior middleweights? Hopefully, after his megabucks rematch with Oscar De La Hoya in September, he'll take a look around and realize how many tantalizing options he has right at 147 pounds.

Think About It: To hammer home the point about this division's depth, look again at those seven, eight, and nine holes: Cintron, Collazo, and Clottey, three prime young fighters with only six losses among them. In most divisions, couldn't you see them being numbers two, three, and four? Seriously, in a pound-for-pound

WELTERWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Kermit Cintron

BEST BOXER
Floyd Mayweather

MOST PROTECTED
Viktor Plotnikov

MOST AVOIDED
Joshua Clottey

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Raul Balbi

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Floyd Mayweather-Miguel Cotto

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Miguel Cotto

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Miguel Cotto

ON THE WAY UP
Andre Berto

ON THE WAY DOWN
Walter Matthysse

BEST FIGHT IN 2007
Miguel Cotto KO 11 Zab Judah

sense, aren't they at least as good as cruiserweights Jean-Marc Mormeck, O'Neil Bell, and Krzysztof Wlodarczyk? Or junior welters Paul Malignaggi, Andreas Kotelnik, and Gavin Rees? Or junior flyweights Giovanni Segura, Edgar Sosa, and Omar Nino? This welterweight division is so deep, Jack Handy can't even wrap his head around it.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Ricky Hatton fires a left hook at Jose Luis Castillo

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

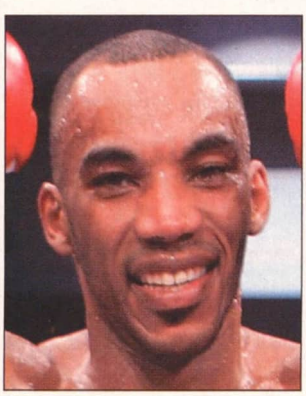
There may only be one **Ricky Hatton**, but there's more than one British junior welterweight worth talking about. In fact, the number-one contender for Hatton's world title is Yorkshire's **Junior Witter**, a man some believe the champion is ducking.

Hatton and Witter are intertwined because, as two of England's leading fighters for the past several years, there has been much talk about them facing each other. Most of that talk has been coming from the Witter camp, since he has infinitely more to gain by squaring off with Hatton than "The Hitman" has to gain against him. Witter is a tricky, awkward boxer with solid pop, and we can't really blame Hatton for avoiding him for all of these years. However, now that Hatton has made his millions and been shown by the likes of Floyd Mayweather that he isn't a welterweight, maybe it's time to give the most deserving 140-pound contender a chance. If they put it in Wembley Stadium, the live gate alone might make it worth Hatton's while.

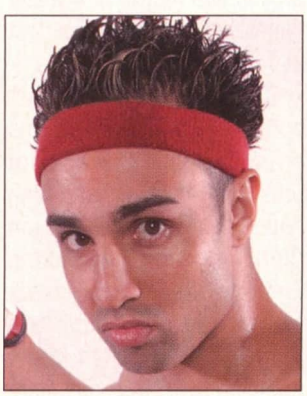
Upstart **Gavin Rees** had also been mentioned as a possible homegrown opponent for Hatton, but when the Welshman lost the WBA junior welter belt to Germany-based Ukrainian **Andreas Kotelnik** in his maiden defense, that option evaporated.

As far as opponents who mean something to American fans, Hatton's best bet is probably **Paulie Malignaggi**, a trash-talking slickster with the mouth to sell tickets, the skills to give Hatton problems, and the pillowy punches to make the fight attractive to Hatton's people. Malignaggi was exposed to a degree in his last fight, a close decision over **Herman Ngoudjo**, but a win is a win and "The Magic Man" remains in line for a big fight.

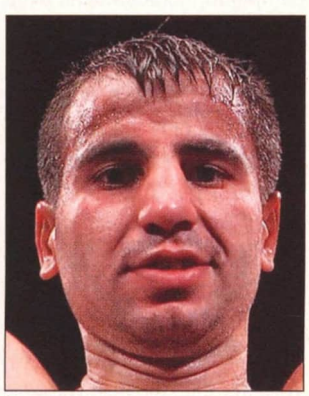
The rest of the division is full of guys whose ceilings have been exposed, veterans like **Souleyman Mbaye**, **Vivian Harris**, **Lovemore Ndou**, **Juan Lazcano** (who will face Hatton on May 24 in front of more than 50,000 at Manchester City Stadium), and the rapidly fading **Jose Luis Castillo**. There are a few talented younger guys in the mix—namely **Demetrius Hopkins**, **Ricardo Torres**, and **Kendall Holt**—but they're all flawed enough to keep



Junior Witter



Paul Malignaggi



Andreas Kotelnik

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Ricardo Torres

BEST BOXER
Junior Witter

MOST PROTECTED
Paul McCloskey

MOST AVOIDED
Junior Witter

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Yodsanan Nanthachai

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Ricky Hatton-
Manny Pacquiao

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Junior Witter

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Randall Bailey

ON THE WAY UP
Victor Ortiz

ON THE WAY DOWN
Mike Arnaoutis

BEST FIGHT IN 2007
Lovemore Ndou KO 11
Naoufel Ben Rabah

fans' excitement in check. Realistically, if you're looking for a meaningful challenger to Hatton beyond Witter or Malignaggi, your best bet is to look down one division at **Nate Cambell** or **Joel Casamayor**, or look down two divisions at **Manny Pacquiao**, who weighed-in at 129 pounds for his rematch with Juan Manuel Marquez, but entered the ring at 145.

Think About It: If welterweight is boxing's deepest division, and junior welter is now one of the sport's most shallow, you have to at least say this much about the 140-pound class: It has one of the deepest prospect wells around. Among **Victor Ortiz**, **Lamont Peterson**, **Devon Alexander**, **Timothy Ray Bradley**, and **Willy Blain**, there's a serious surplus of up-and-comers to get excited about. And since they all rate to grow a bit between now and when they're ready to fight the elite, it's safe to say that deep welterweight division will remain stocked for several more years to come.

PHOTO BY LUIS ACOSTA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

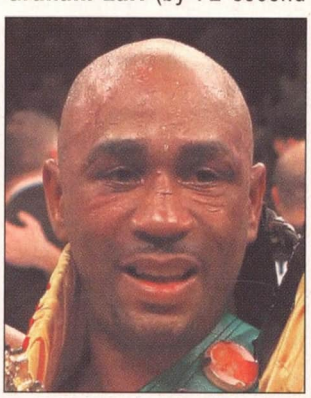
Nate Campbell punishes Juan Diaz en route to upset victory

LIGHTWEIGHT

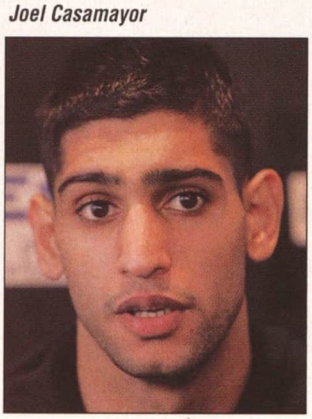
Recent events in the 135-pound division illustrate what a huge impact the judges—and their sometimes-irrational scoring decisions—can have on the sport of boxing. Had we not seen two of the most perplexing scorecards ever turned in, **Jose Santa Cruz** would have taken The Ring lightweight title from **Joel Casamayor** last November at Madison Square Garden. And had we seen just one more ridiculous scorecard after the **Nate Campbell-Juan Diaz** fight in Cancun in March, Diaz would have retained his three alphabet belts and Campbell would have been the victim of a robbery just as bad as the heist Santa Cruz suffered.

Boxing shouldn't be about luck, but sometimes it is. Casamayor got lucky. Santa Cruz got unlucky. Diaz very nearly got lucky. Campbell very nearly got unlucky. But results are results, Casamayor is still the linear champ, and thanks to his sensational TKO of previously undefeated Australian slugger **Michael Katsidis**, now has a much more favorable Q Rating. Hopefully, "The Galaxxy Warrior," who fought so brilliantly in out-pressuring pressure fighter Diaz, will get a shot at Casamayor, so that we find out just who is the division's best. Because the question of who's the best right now, considering how much better the 36-year-old Casamayor looked against Katsidis than he did against Santa Cruz, and considering that Campbell revealed Diaz to be more flawed than we thought, is an impossible one to answer.

Soon, perhaps, the answer to that question will be **Amir Khan**, the 21-year-old British Olympian who has more raw ability and pound-for-pound potential than any of the fighters currently in the discussion. Nobody knows whether Khan will still be a lightweight when he's ready for a title shot. But given his impressive recent wins over **Graham Earl** (by 72-second knockout) and **Gairy St. Clair** (by shutout 12-round decision), he may just be ready before the year is out. Oh, and Khan



Joel Casamayor



Amir Khan

LIGHTWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Nate Campbell

BEST BOXER
Zahir Raheem

MOST PROTECTED
John Murray

MOST AVOIDED
Zahir Raheem

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Stefano Zoff

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Joel Casamayor-Nate Campbell

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Nate Campbell

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Michael Katsidis

ON THE WAY UP
Amir Khan

ON THE WAY DOWN
Gairy St. Clair

BEST FIGHT IN 2007
Michael Katsidis W 12 Czar Amonsot

isn't the only prospect worth watching here; American **Anthony Peterson** looks like a can't-miss as well.

The old guard, however, may have something to say about handing the division over. Worth a mention are **David Diaz**, who holds a come-from-behind kayo win over Santa Cruz and who seems to be the softer-touch titlist everyone without a belt is targeting; **Julio Diaz**, who is probably on the slide but can't be totally written off just because Juan Diaz overwhelmed him last October; and **Zahir Raheem**, who makes boring fights nine times out of 10, but who has still never been decisively defeated.

Think About It: A dozen years after the '96 Atlanta Olympics, eight of the 12 fighters on the U.S. boxing team are either retired (Lawrence Clay-Bey, Nate Jones, David Reid, Fernando Vargas, Albert Guardado) or irrelevant (Rhoshii Wells, Terrance Cauthen, Eric Morel), but of the four that remain, two are top-10 lightweight contenders: David Diaz and Raheem. (The other two relevant members of the '96 team are Floyd Mayweather and Antonio Tarver.) Diaz' career trajectory is particularly interesting: He fought only 13 times in his first six years as a pro, including a two-year sabbatical from '00-'02, and because he accumulated so little mileage in his early-20s, he's been able to outlast most of his Olympic teammates and earn by far his biggest purses in his early-30s. It's not the classic Olympian's path, but it's worked out nicely for the 31-year-old Diaz (who, believe it or not, was the older man by three months against Erik Morales last August).

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

What a fascinating, fun, intriguing division this is—for the next five minutes, anyway, until **Manny Pacquiao** officially vacates the 130-pound world championship to move up to lightweight.

Seriously, for a talent-packed top five, welterweight is probably the only division with a lineup superior to Pacquiao, **Juan Manuel Marquez**, **Joan Guzman**, **Edwin Valero**, and **Humberto Soto**. It's a shame that Pacquiao's probably done here, because we would have loved to have seen him defend against some of those guys, but at the same time, there's no shortage of appealing fights for him at 135. Especially when you consider that Marquez is probably going to follow Pac-Man up there in hopes of making a third fight happen.

Subtract Pacquiao and Marquez, and the junior lightweight division doesn't look quite so extraordinary. But it's still a solid weight class, brimming with global flavor. The undefeated duo of the Dominican Republic's Guzman and Venezuela's Valero are particularly worth getting excited about. Guzman can stink it out sometimes, but for hand speed, know-how, defense, and athleticism, he's a formidable package if not a consistently entertaining one. His decision wins over Soto and **Jorge Barrios** have established his quality, and he's the kind of craftsman you'd have to consider an extremely live underdog even against Pacquiao or Marquez.

Valero, meanwhile, would be live against Pacquiao or Marquez for entirely different reasons. He won't outslick either of them, but with 23 knockouts in 23 fights, including 19 first-rounders, the danger he presents is obvious. We even named him the "Best Puncher" in the class over Pacquiao, which is a serious statement (it was a tough call, but Valero has a pure puncher's attitude,

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Edwin Valero

BEST BOXER
Juan Manuel Marquez

MOST PROTECTED
Yoshimitsu Yashiro

MOST AVOIDED
Joan Guzman

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Manuel Medina

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Manny Pacquiao-
Juan Manuel Marquez III

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Juan Manuel Marquez

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Manny Pacquiao

ON THE WAY UP
Vitali Tajbert

ON THE WAY DOWN
Nedal Hussein

BEST FIGHT IN 2007
Juan Manuel Marquez W 12
Marco Antonio Barrera

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Both Manny Pacquiao and Juan Manuel Marquez thought they won their rematch

whereas Pac-Man's aggression has waned his last couple of fights).

If by chance Guzman and Valero follow the money train up to 135 also, the junior lightweights still have some solid veterans to anchor the class, including Mexico's Soto and Argentina's Barrios (losing to Guzman certainly doesn't disqualify either one from contention). Scotland's **Alex Arthur** is lacking defensively but has a huge heart, while Thailand's **Yodsanan Nanthachai** remains a sturdy (if recently untested) ex-titleholder.

And toward the bottom of the rankings, there's South Africa's **Mzonke Fana**, serving as a shining example of how just about anyone can win an alphabet belt these days.

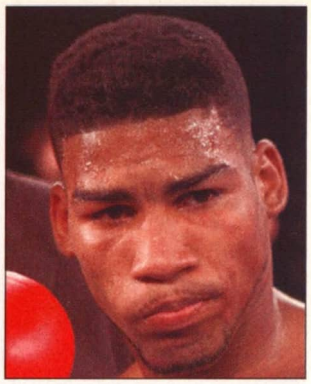
Think About It: Just how close were the two Pacquiao-Marquez bouts? Combining all of the scorecards from both fights, Pacquiao is on top 679-678, a margin of one lousy point. The Marco Antonio Barrera-Erik Morales rivalry is noted for the extreme closeness of their bouts, but even they can't compare to Pacquiao and Marquez in this numerical assessment, as Barrera "clearly" (yes, the quotes are there to indicate sarcasm) outpointed Morales 1,029-1,021 over the course of their three bouts. Eight points spread across nine scorecards—those are two evenly matched warriors. But not quite as evenly matched as Pac-Man and JMM.

FEATHERWEIGHT

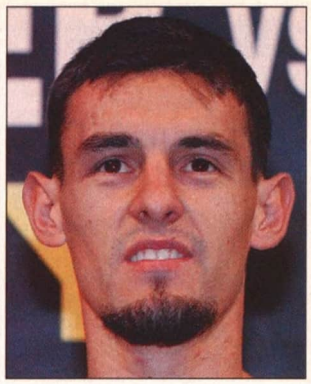
The featherweight division is a little bit like Drew Barrymore in the *Charlie's Angels* movies. Drew's not a bad looking girl, but standing between Cameron Diaz and Lucy Liu, she doesn't get a whole lot of eyeballs focusing on her. Same goes for the 126-pounders, who have Manny Pacquiao, Juan Manuel Marquez, and company four pounds to the north and Israel Vazquez and Rafael Marquez spraying buckets of blood four pounds in the other direction. It's easy to pass right over the featherweights, a division light on superstars and recent superfights.

But it isn't a terrible division. Or at least, it has the potential to be interesting. The biggest problem right now is that the division's longest reigning titlist, **Chris John**, fights almost exclusively in Indonesia (with occasional trips to Japan) and, more to the point, insists on facing the dregs of the division. Since upsetting Juan Manuel Marquez for an alphabet belt in March '06, "The Dragon" has fought **Renan Acosta**, **Jose Rojas**, **Zaiki Takemoto**, and **Roinet Caballero**. None of those four had more than 24 wins, and none had less than four losses. Each one was an unworthy, unranked (by THE RING), and unknown.

It's a shame John insists on existing on the fringes, because the rest of this weight class is gathering some steam. Strong southpaw **Robert Guerrero** has matured enormously over the past year, scoring devastating knockouts in each of his last three bouts, most recently outfighting one-time hot prospect **Jason Litzau** to surpass John in this magazine's ratings. Slickster **Steven Luevano** has turned the corner over the last two years, and even showed some unexpected power in beating previously undefeated **Nicky Cook** for a title belt last July. And Venezuelan **Jorge Linares'** back-to-back breakdowns of **Oscar Larios** and **Gamaliel Diaz** (who handed Guerrero his only loss) have many experts pegging the well-schooled boxer-puncher as a future pound-for-pound entrant. The best part is, Guerrero is 24, Luevano is 27, and Linares is just 22.



Yuriorkis Gamboa



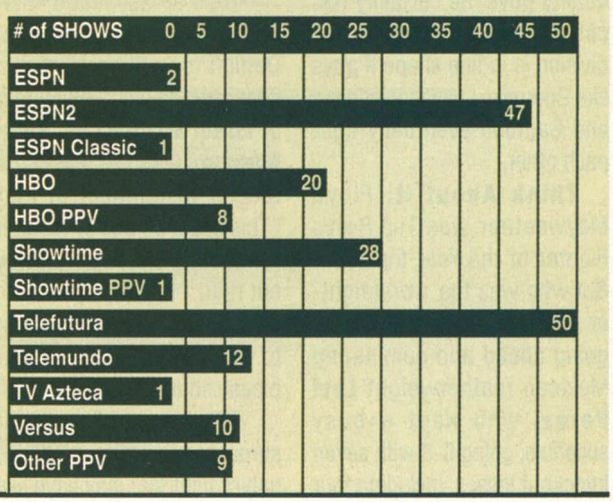
Robert Guerrero

Oh, and don't forget Cuban **Yuriorkis Gamboa**, the 26-year-old who just recently defected, turned pro, and has scored nine wins, eight by knockout, in his first 10 months in the paid ranks.

Chris John

BOXING ON TV

Another year has come and gone, and again, despite the usual rumors, there was no boxing on free network TV. That's the bad news. The good? As far as boxing on cable TV goes, the sport has as strong a presence as ever. In total, there were 189 live boxing cards aired on stations available nationwide, which averages out to more than 3.6 per week. Unfortunately, 18 of those were pay-per-views (a number almost identical to the last couple of years), and half of those weren't distributed by HBO or Showtime, which means they were relatively minor shows that simply couldn't find a network home. Here's a breakdown of how many cards each network brought into your living room:



FEATHERWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Robert Guerrero

BEST BOXER
Chris John

MOST PROTECTED
Chris John

MOST AVOIDED
Gamaliel Diaz

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Pastor Maurin

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Robert Guerrero-Jorge Linares

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Orlando Salido

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Jorge Linares

ON THE WAY UP
Yuriorkis Gamboa

ON THE WAY DOWN
Eric Aiken

BEST FIGHT IN 2007
Jorge Linares KO 10 Oscar Larios

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Israel Vazquez zaps Rafael Marquez with a jab

The rest of the division is less interesting—we're not quite sure how excited to get about Japan's **Hiroyuki Enoki** or South Africa's **Thomas Mashaba**, while we think we know where the ceilings of **Orlando Salido**, **Jorge Solis**, and **Martin Honorio** are.

Still, if John wants to fight quality guys, he certainly has options. And if he doesn't, the division is in fine shape if guys like Guerrero, Luevano, Linares, and Gamboa eventually fight each other.

Think About It: Floyd Mayweather was THE RING's Fighter of the Year for 2007. But who was the *worst* fighter of the year in '07? We're going ahead and nominating Mexican featherweight **Levi Perez**, who kept a busy schedule, going 0-8 with seven knockout losses, including four in the first round and three in the second. That horrific 2007 campaign brings Perez' career record to 0-12 with 11 kayo defeats. It's hard to say what's more perplexing: Perez' desire to remain a pro fighter, or the Mexican commissions' approval of him as an opponent—sometimes just two weeks after a knockout loss.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

Props to last year's "State Of The Game" author William Dettloff for writing 12 months ago, after only one installment of **Israel Vazquez** vs. **Rafael Marquez** (and the least spectacular installment at that), "This could be one of the great trilogies of the era if it works out right." Bill, if you have any stock tips or know who's going to win next year's Super Bowl, please share the wealth.

With a second fight that far surpassed their first battle, and a third fight that may have even surpassed their Fight-of-the-Year-winning second slugfest, Vazquez and Marquez elevated this division (and the whole sport, frankly) enormously. It's rare to find fighters this skilled and this brave who match up so perfectly, and together, they've probably done enough to lift each other to Hall of Fame status. Canastota was a stretch for both of them, especially Vazquez, prior to this trilogy, but not anymore.

Interestingly, as you'll see in the accompanying sidebar, we've declined to name Vazquez the division's best puncher or best boxer, even though he is its champion and it's best all-around fighter. For pure punching power, he falls slightly short of what the heavy-handed **Daniel Ponce De Leon** can do, and for pure skill, Marquez indicated in their three fights that he's a sliver above Vazquez. But as the division's second best puncher and second best boxer, Vazquez is its most complete package.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Daniel Ponce De Leon

BEST BOXER
Rafael Marquez

MOST PROTECTED
Wethya Sakmuangklang

MOST AVOIDED
Celestino Caballero

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Mauricio Pastrana

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez IV

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Celestino Caballero

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Israel Vazquez

ON THE WAY UP
Juan Manuel Lopez

ON THE WAY DOWN
Bernard Dunne

BEST FIGHT IN 2007
Israel Vazquez KO 6 Rafael Marquez

Ponce De Leon, unfortunately, only brings half the package, still as raw and outboxable as ever after seven years in the pro game. He recently bailed out of a May rematch with **Celestino Caballero**, the only man to beat him so far. Caballero deserves a shot at the real title whenever Vazquez and Marquez decide they're done with one another.

The rest of the division isn't terribly interesting, though undefeated Canadian **Steve Molitor** is starting to turn heads with his considerable southpaw skill. Spanish puncher **Kiko Martinez** got our attention with an 86-second blowout of highly touted **Bernard Dunne** last August, but lost a decision to Englishman **Rendall Munroe** in his next start, which removed a lot of the luster.

Think About It: If Vazquez-Marquez III is named The Ring's 2008 Fight of the Year (clearly, it's the leader in the clubhouse at this early stage), that will make three years in a row that a junior featherweight fight won the award (their second fight won it in '07, and Somsak Sithchatchawal-Mahyar Monshipour won in '06), and four times this decade (the first fight between Erik Morales and Marco Antonio Barrera, the only one of their battles fought at 122 pounds, won in 2000). Not bad for a division that hadn't produced a single Fight of the Year prior to Y2K.

BANTAMWEIGHT

Want to know how the top four in the Ring rankings for the 118-pound division read at this time last year? **Hozumi Hasegawa**, then **Veerapol Sahaprom**, then **Wladimir Sidorenko**, then **Silence Mabuza**. Fans of stability rejoice; not a darned thing has changed at the top of this division.

Slick Japanese southpaw Hasegawa has done next to nothing, decisioning the likes of **Simpiwe Vetyeka** and **Simone Maludrottu**. Thai veteran Veerapol has turned marking time into an art form, scoring nine straight wins over totally nondescript opposition since his March '06 rematch loss to Hasegawa. Germany-based Ukrainian Sidorenko fended off such superstars as **Jerome Arnould** and **Nobuto Ikehara**. And South Africa's Mabuza, quite possibly the division's best fighter despite losses in '05 and '06 to the outstanding Rafael Marquez, plugged along with wins against **Mbwana Matumla** and **Eden Sonsona**.

It's easy to dismiss the bantamweights as irrelevant in America because none of the top fighters are American (you have to go 28 fighters deep on Boxrec.com to find one who is), but the truth is that they're nearly irrelevant throughout the world because none of the top fighters have shown any interest in fighting each other. The lone exception is Mabuza, who was obviously willing to take a chance against Marquez and may have looked a little too competent to earn any other title opportunities.

Below the top four, however—now that's where the action was in '07. We saw two interesting fights on American TV that shook up the division, starting with **Gerry Penalosa**'s upset bodyshot kayo of **Jhonny Gonzalez** in August, which knocked the bantam class' most TV-friendly fighter down a couple of pegs. (As a side note, just when you got used to the way Gonzalez spells his name, along comes unbeaten Colombian bantam **Yonnhy Perez**; take that, Mr. and Mrs. Gonzalez!)

The other key fight for re-shaping the division was **Joseph "King Kong" Agbeko**'s stunning upset stoppage of **Luis Perez** in September, which had a distinct out-with-the-old-in-with-the-new flavor to it. Unfortunately, as was the case throughout Perez' prime,

BANTAMWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Joseph Agbeko

BEST BOXER
Hozumi Hasegawa

MOST PROTECTED
Veerapol Sahaprom

MOST AVOIDED
Silence Mabuza

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Ratanachai Vorapin

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Silence Mabuza-Gerry Penalosa

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Silence Mabuza

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Jhonny Gonzalez

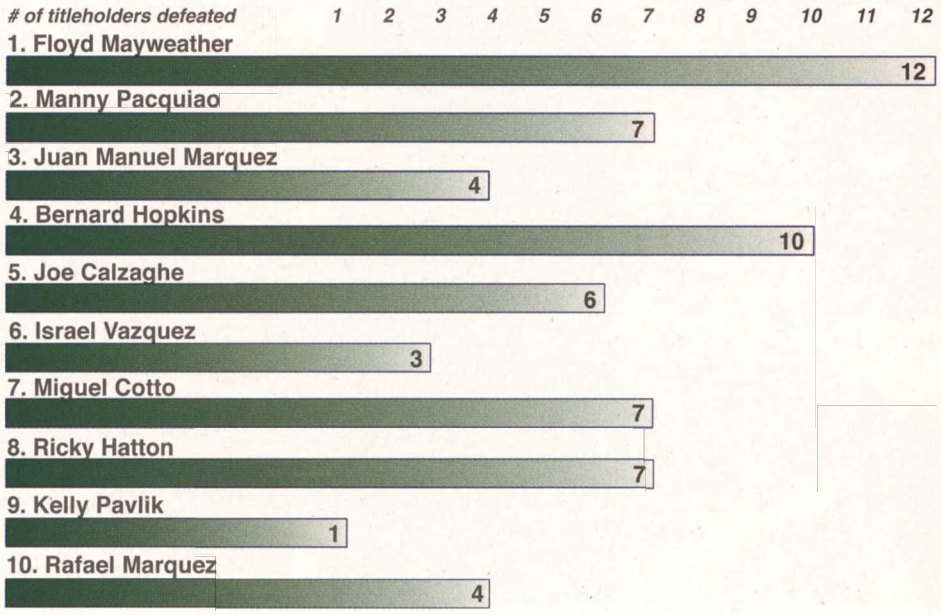
ON THE WAY UP
Abner Mares

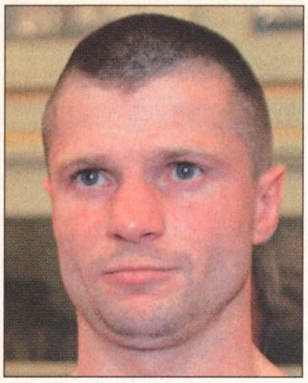
ON THE WAY DOWN
Luis Perez

BEST FIGHT IN 2007
Gerry Penalosa KO 7 Jhonny Gonzalez

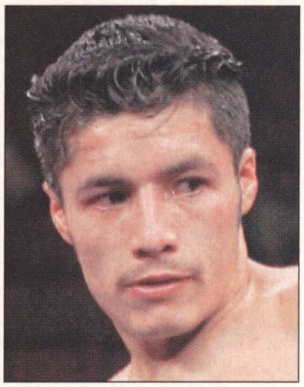
TITLISTS VS. TITLISTS

One of the ways to calculate a fighter's worth is to count the number of champions or titlists he's defeated. Here's how The Ring's pound-for-pound top 10 stack up:





Wladimir Sidorenko



Jhonny Gonzalez

Agbeko may not be overly high on Don King's priority list. As of press time, this King Kong hadn't swatted at a helicopter in five months and had no Empire State Building climbs scheduled. Let's hope he ultimately does better than Perez' five-fights-in-five-years plan.

Think About It: The full-time editors of this magazine and its contributing editor don't have to agree on every last thing (what fun would it be if we did?), so this seems as good an opportunity as any to rail against a recent decision made by the staffers. They gave the 2007 Comeback of the Year award to Paulie Malignaggi, whereas this writer feels the award should have been a slam-dunk for Penalosa. Since losing his 115-pound alphabet title in '98, Penalosa had spent nearly a full decade below the radar (going 0-3 in alphabet title fights while scoring no wins of great note), only to re-emerge in '07 with a controversial decision loss to Daniel Ponce De Leon at 122 pounds and the come-from-behind starching of Gonzalez. It's fair to say Penalosa was about a 3-1 or 4-1 underdog in both fights, and a lot of folks will tell you he won them both. *That's* a serious comeback year.

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Gerry Penalosa celebrated us come-from-behind kayo of Jhonny Gonzalez

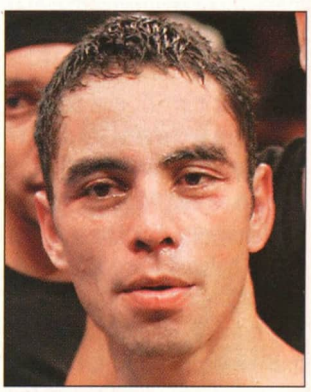
JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT

When you get down to a division like junior bantam, where the fighters are approximately the size of one of Roger Clemens' butt cheeks, where the top-10 boxers include four Mexicans, a Venezuelan, a Japanese, a Russian, a Filipino, an Aussie-Armenian, and just one American, you don't expect it to be a division that American fans would have much interest in. Sure, there are always your hardcore freaks who trade DVDs with friends on other continents and can tell you **Dimitri Kirilov**'s shoe size and **Nobuo Nashiro**'s mom's maiden name, but your average, run-of-the-mill American fight fan hasn't paid much attention to this weight division since Johnny Tapia outpointed Danny Romero.

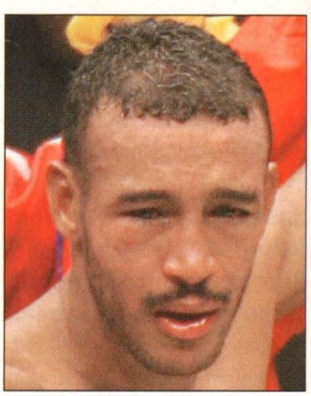
Thanks to a pair of bouts on the pay-per-view undercard of Kelly Pavlik-Jermain Taylor II in February, however, that may be changing. No, PPV undercard bouts don't reach the biggest audiences, but these two reached most of the serious fight fans, and they saw two intriguing fights between top 115-pounders: **Fernando Montiel** vs. **Martin Castillo** and **Cristian Mijares** vs. **Jose Navarro**. Both winners—Montiel, who scored a spectacular fourth-round kayo, and Mijares, who displayed the same exceptional boxing skills he used to whip **Jorge Arce** 10 months earlier—raised their stocks significantly, and any fan who saw them in action is clamoring to see them again.

In a perfect world, we'll see them in a ring together sometime soon; Montiel vs. Mijares would be a fascinating matchup. It's precisely the sort of fight on which *Boxing After Dark* was founded, and it's precisely the sort of fight that could *really* get people buzzing about this weight class. Especially because it's a weight class where the talent doesn't end with just those two guys. Before we get to that much-anticipated match, we're getting one almost as good: Mijares vs. **Alexander Munoz**, May 17 in Durango, Mexico.

Munoz had his struggles with Castillo in the past, but he's otherwise undefeated and an excellent puncher with plenty of experience. Nashiro's



Fernando Montiel



Alexander Munoz

THE CHAMPS AND TITLISTS BY COUNTRIES

With 15 champs/titlists calling the United States home, almost four times as many as any other country, but with 36 non-Americans holding belts, what this chart ultimately shows is that boxing is very much a global sport, but that America has to still be considered the center of the boxing universe. That's cool with us. What isn't so cool is the fact there are 51 guys out there calling themselves "champions," and that's not even counting the WBO, any "interim" titlists, or multiple WBA beltholders in the same division. If we did count all of those, we'd have a chart so cluttered you wouldn't be able to see any of the map behind all the text.

10 COUNTRIES TIED WITH 1: Australia • France • Ghana • Indonesia • Wales Panama • Russia • South Africa • Thailand • Uzbekistan

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Fernando Montiel

BEST BOXER
Cristian Mijares

MOST PROTECTED
Pramuansak Posuwan

MOST AVOIDED
Luis Melendez

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Zolile Mbityi

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Fernando Montiel-Cristian Mijares

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Jorge Arce

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Jorge Arce

ON THE WAY UP
A.J. Banal

ON THE WAY DOWN
Martin Castillo

BEST FIGHT IN 2007
Fernando Montiel KO 12 Luis Melendez

only loss is to Munoz, and he's only 26 years old and should bounce back. Former U.S. Olympian Navarro is consistently solid, and Kirilov holds a close decision win over him, indicating his own worth. Arce, Castillo, and **Vic Darchinyan** are all ex-titlists who may or may not have another serious run in them, but at worst, they're entertaining pugilists who've built up decent names by fighting repeatedly on American TV.

Is junior bantam as deep as the welterweight division? No. Is Montiel-Mijares as appealing as Mayweather-Cotto? Not quite. But this is nevertheless a deep division with a hot matchup at the top, and if you're a serious fight fan, you've started paying attention by now.

Think About It: The most amazing thing about Navarro's tough-luck 0-4 record in title fights is that in two of those fights he won by a *shutout* on one of the judges' cards. In his first title challenge, a split decision loss to **Katsushige Kawashima** that's widely regarded as a robbery, judge William Boodhoo had Navarro up 120-109 while the other two judges scored it by one and two points for Kawashima. And against Mijares, judge Doug Tucker saw it 120-108 for Navarro (as ridiculous a scorecard as has ever been submitted), while the other two

PHOTO BY PAUL J. RICHARDS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Cristian Mijares batters bloody Jorge Arce into the ropes

scorers had Mijares on top by two and six points. We don't have the time to look up every fighter who's ever challenged for a title, but we're going to make an educated guess and say Navarro probably stands alone in history for losing two separate title fights in which one of the judges didn't think he lost a round.

FLYWEIGHT

In boxing as a whole, nobody would call 2007 "the year of the upset," but in the flyweight division, that's precisely what it was.

The three major alphabet belts all changed hands in huge shockers, one of which was named the Upset of the Year by THE RING and produced the first 112-pound Knockout of the Year in the 19-year history of the award. That, of course, was **Nonito Donaire's** fifth-round kayo of **Vic Darchinyan**, which saw the division's hardest puncher and only American TV attraction upended by the baby brother of a fighter he'd dominated nine months earlier. Whenever the knockout victim has no recollection of getting starched, you know the punch was something special, and Donaire himself may be something special, as the 25-year-old looked spectacular against **Luis Maldonado** in his subsequent outing.

You could argue, however, that Donaire's win over Darchinyan, despite being named Upset of the Year, was actually not quite as inconceivable going in as **Daisuke Naito**'s upset of **Pongsaklek Wonjongkam**. Not only had Pongsaklek scored 17 consecutive successful title defenses coming into their July '07 bout, but two of them had come against Naito, including one by knockout in 34 seconds, the shortest flyweight title fight ever. Nevertheless, the determined Naito outpointed Pongsaklek unanimously in their third fight, and in his second defense, in March '08, he kept the title against the Thai veteran via draw.

As amazing as the years enjoyed by Donaire and Naito were, however, **Takefumi Sakata** just might have them both trumped. He scored a third-round stoppage of the excellent **Lorenzo Parra** to claim a belt in March '07, and then won a unanimous decision over talented **Roberto Vasquez** in July. What makes those wins so remarkable? Sakata lost to Parra in '05 and to Vasquez in '06, meaning that in back-to-back fights, he avenged losses to boxers with a combined record coming in of 51-1. Unfortunately, his storybook year was made a little bit less storybook when he squeaked by on a draw against tough **Denkaosan Kaovichit** in November.

Lost in the mix somewhat, and ranked behind the upset trio of Donaire, Naito, and Sakata as well as the still-elite Pongsaklek, is WBO beltholder **Omar Narvaez**. The 2000 Olympian from Argentina is undefeated and has made 12 defenses of his strap, but he's going to have to fight opponents better than **Marlon Marquez** and **Carlos Tamara** if he expects to convince anyone he's the division's best.

Meanwhile, below the top five, this remains a deep and interesting weight class, with an ex-titlist like Vasquez lurking, with the aforementioned Denkaosan right below him in the ratings, with **Brian Viloria** and **Hugo Cazares** trying to decide if they belong here or at junior fly, and with **Koki Kameda**, a rock star in his native Japan, ready for a title shot. One thing this division is not, assuming Darchinyan doesn't come back down from junior bantam, is a division of

WHAT'S IN, WHAT'S OUT

IN	OUT
"Money May"	"Pretty Boy"
Andre Berto	Andre Dirrell
Original trainers	Guns for hire
Roy Jones calling everybody out	Everybody calling Roy Jones out
24/7	Legendary Nights
Joe "Fred Flintstone" Mesi	Sultan "Barney Rubble" Ibragimov
Versus network fan scoring	Harold Lederman's scorecards
"The Galaxxy Warrior"	"The Holy Warrior"
Joe Cortez, dangling tape remover	Joe Cortez, Hatton hope remover

FLYWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Nonito Donaire

BEST BOXER
Nonito Donaire

MOST PROTECTED
Panomroonglek Kratingdaenggym

MOST AVOIDED
Andrea Sarritzu

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Luis Lazarte

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Daisuke Naito-Koki Kameda

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Denkaosaen Kaovichit

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Nonito Donaire

ON THE WAY UP
Adrian Hernandez

ON THE WAY DOWN
Juan Alberto Rosas

BEST FIGHT IN 2007
Nonito Donaire KO 5 Vic Darchinyan

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Nonito Donaire bangs home a right hand against Luis Maldonado

punchers. That's why in the accompanying sidebar, you'll find Donaire, who's really more boxer than puncher, listed as the "Best Puncher."

Think About It: Four-fight series are rare these days, but that's not what's most unusual about the Naito-Pongsaklek saga; what's most bizarre is that the results went in the opposite order of how you'd think a four-fight series would go. It started with a first-round blastout for Pongsaklek, then a one-sided technical decision win for the Thai, then the decision win for Naito, and then the draw. Reverse the order, and it all appears logical: It starts with a draw, so of course there's a rematch; then Naito wins a close decision, so they fight a third time; then Pongsaklek wins a technical decision, evening the score and forcing a fourth fight; and that one ends in a quick blowout, not unlike how the Pacquiao-Morales and Zale-Graziano rivalries ended. That order would make perfect sense. The real order in which things happened is considerably more puzzling.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT

Is it a good thing when a tiny division like junior fly, which normally gets completely ignored by the fans, the networks, and the press, has a universally recognized champ? Absolutely. It gives everybody a fighter to focus on, something to make a division full of hard-to-pronounce names and meaningless belts look a lot less cluttered. However, is it a good thing when that fighter is a defensive southpaw who can't punch a lick? Not so much.

No offense meant to **Ivan Calderon**, possibly the second best pure boxer in the sport (behind Floyd Mayweather) and a legit top-20 pound-for-pound player now that he's gotten seven years into his career without a loss, but it just isn't possible for most fans to get excited about his fights. He has that Pernell Whitaker-like ability to land quick punches and make opponents miss, which is inspiring to watch for a couple of rounds, but eventually gets repetitive, plus he has an unfortunate tendency to fade later in fights as determined opponents realize they have nothing to fear. It all makes for a package that's hard to sell on TV.

Against truly top-notch opponents, like the man from whom he won the championship last August, **Hugo Cazares**, he can be moderately compelling. Against a mediocre, unknown fighter, which describes almost everyone else Calderon has faced in his 30-fight pro career, he's a snore.

This division does, however, have several opponents out there who can make "Iron Boy" interesting, as long as he chooses to fight them rather than the anonymous likes of **Juan Esquer** and **Cesar Canchila**. For starters, there's ex-champ Cazares, who had his moments against Calderon and who says he can still make 108 pounds and would like a rematch. That fight is being discussed for the spring or summer.

Ulises Solis, who had a great '07 that included four wins, all by knockout, and some television exposure, would also pose a stern test for Calderon, as would the mind-bogglingly busy **Edgar Sosa** *(see "Think About It" below)*. Among up-and-comers, there's the division's fearsome young puncher, Mexico's **Giovanni Segura** (whether he can do more than punch remains uncertain), and there's yet another Mexican, **Omar Salado**, who impressively drew with Solis in '06 and hasn't been able to land a decent fight since.

One thing this division has no shortage of is 2000 Olympians. Calderon competed in Sydney (losing in the first round), and his contenders include gold medalist **Brahim Asloum** (who finally won a belt at 108 after coming up short twice at 112), **Brian Viloria** (who's bounced between 108 and 112 his whole pro career), and South Africa's **Phumzile Matyhila**.

Think About It: Since winning his alphabet belt against Viloria in April '07, Sosa made four defenses in his first 10 months as a titlist, and had two more scheduled for after our press deadline, one at the end of March and one at the end of April. Starting with his first defense, on July 28, 2007, that would give Sosa

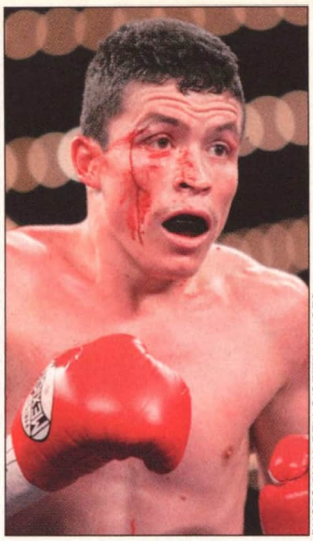


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Ulises Solis ignored cut eye to beat Will Grigsby

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Edgar Sosa sends Brian Viloria reeling

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Giovanni Segura

BEST BOXER
Ivan Calderon

MOST PROTECTED
Phumzile Matyhila

MOST AVOIDED
Omar Salado

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Bert Batawang

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Hugo Cazares-Giovanni Segura

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Ulises Solis

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Giovanni Segura

ON THE WAY UP
Roman Gonzalez

ON THE WAY DOWN
Rodel Mayol

BEST FIGHT IN 2007
Edgar Sosa W 12
Brian Viloria

Yutaka Niida jabs his way inside against Jose Luis Varela

six defenses in nine months, an absolutely unheard-of pace in today's fight game. Disregarding the illegitimacy of Sosa's reign because Calderon is the real champ, if he wanted to catch Joe Louis' record for consecutive title defenses, he's on pace to do so in just a little over three years' time! And for some extreme perspective, note that while Sosa will have logged six fights in nine months, Oscar De La Hoya's last six fights span just five years.

STRAWWEIGHT

If you're like us, you've been looking for something to get excited about in boxing's tiniest division ever since Ricardo Lopez moved up in weight in 1999, and we think we may have finally found something. All you need to hear are two words: "Little Pacquiao."

That's the nickname of 27-year-old Filipino southpaw **Florante Condes**, who claimed his first alphabet belt in a crowd-pleasing brawl with veteran **Muhammad Rachman** last July. Little Pacquiao scored one knockdown early and another crucial one late in the fight to pull out a split decision and rescue this division from the excitement drought it was in during the Ivan Calderon era. Is Condes half as good as Calderon or Lopez? Probably not. He has three early-career losses on his record, and they came against ordinary foes Sonny Boy Jaro, Greg Mangan, and Benjie Sorolla. Still, if he proves half as thrilling as Pacquiao, strawweight fans are in for some fun times ahead.

Especially because one of his fellow beltholders is a fellow Filipino, **Donnie Nietas**. Put a unification bout between those two in Manila, and the country may be crimeless for a night the way it is when "Pac-Man" fights. First, however, Condes has to get past **Nkosinathi Joyi**, a highly dangerous, undefeated South African, on May 31, while Nietas has a defense against oft-recycled **Daniel Reyes** on tap.

Elsewhere in the division, you have **Yutaka Niida**, who happens to own the longest active WBA, WBC, or IBF title reign in all of boxing. The Japanese titlist has yet to seek unification bouts, unfortunately, but he has consistently taken on the division's best non-beltholders, as evidenced by the fact that he's made seven defenses in his current reign and none of his challengers had more than three losses on their records.

Rachman and **Eagle Kyowa** were enjoying lengthy reigns similar to Niida's, but both got upset in the latter half of '07—Rachman by Condes, and Eagle on a narrow decision to **Oleydong Sithsamerchai**. Oleydong is undefeated in 25 fights, but has yet to fight outside Thailand and has only faced two world-class opponents so far, so the 22-year-old still has a lot to prove.

Moving from the Far East to a nation a little closer to home, there's a history of Mexican success in this weight class, but there's only one Mexican worth talking about at this juncture: **Raul Garcia**. With a one-sided win in his last fight against solid **Ronald Barrera** (who lost a two-point split decision to Calderon a year ago), the undefeated "Rayito" is showing potential. We'll get a better idea of how good he is before long, because he's a mandatory challenger to Little Pacquiao.

Think About It: Who's the second-best strawweight titlist of all-time? Lopez is number one by a ludicrous distance (it's like the gap between Bob Marley and the number-two reggae artist, whoever that might be), but the argument for number two seems to come down to three men: Rosendo Alvarez, Calderon, and Niida. Alvarez' reign was the shortest at just under three years, but his technical-decision draw and narrow loss to Lopez prove just how talented "El Bufalo" was. Calderon reigned for four years, made 11 defenses, and rarely lost rounds, but he was defending the lesser-regarded WBO strap and feasting on second-rate competition. Niida, meanwhile, has reigned twice, the latter lasting almost four years as of press time, and his challengers have been better than Calderon's on the whole. We shouldn't judge him until his work at 105 pounds is done, but when he is done, don't be surprised if he's at number two when The Ring gets desperate enough to compile a "Top 20 Strawweights Of All-Time" section. ■

STRAWWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Florante Condes

BEST BOXER
Yutaka Niida

MOST PROTECTED
Kwanthai Chor Nor Pattalung

MOST AVOIDED
Katsunari Takayama

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Makoto Suzuki

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Florante Condes-Donnie Nietas

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Eagle Kyowa

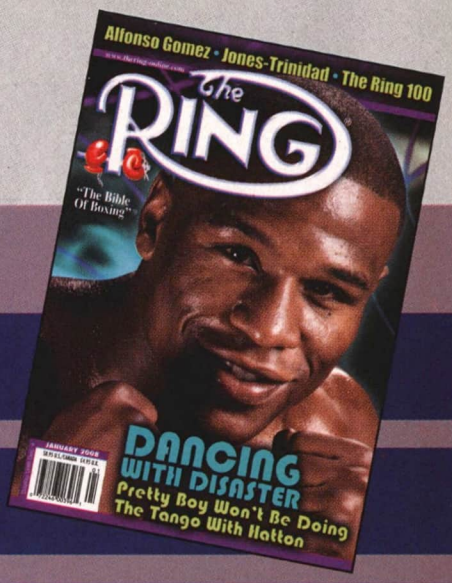
MOST FUN TO WATCH
Florante Condes

ON THE WAY UP
Raul Garcia

ON THE WAY DOWN
Sithembile Kibiti

BEST FIGHT IN 2007
Florante Condes W 12 Muhammad Rachman

The RING



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WILL RICKY HAVE A HANGOVER?

"Sometimes When You Get Knocked Out It's Hard To Bounce Back"

By Brian Doogan

In the days and weeks following his devastating 10th-round knockout defeat by Floyd Mayweather, the first of his 10-year career, Ricky Hatton struggled for perspective. He could have consoled himself with the simple truth that he lost to a brilliant boxer who delivered a virtuoso performance on December 8 in Las Vegas's MGM Grand Garden Arena. But the "Hitman" from Manchester is a proud warrior, a veritable throwback who has had had brilliant nights too. For an accomplished champion who set off for Vegas with not a semblance of self-doubt, dealing with defeat was never going to be easy.

Stories began to emanate out of Manchester and other locations that suggested as much. "I feel like a woman at the minute, I can't stop crying," Hatton revealed in an interview. "All that's missing is a pair of tits. It's going to take a while for me to get my head around losing. The biggest fight of my life was the biggest disappointment. I think

PHOTO BY ALEX LIVESEY/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Rumors were rife following Hatton's loss to Mayweather, including one that had him leaving long-time trainer Billy Graham, pictured giving Hatton between-rounds advice while cutman Mick Williams attends to Ricky's wounds. But the rumor was false and all indications are that Graham will be retained.

the problem was I lost my head a bit. I was feeling sorry for myself."

The (London) *Mirror* pedaled the line that Hatton was considering a split with trainer Billy Graham, which Graham denied vehemently in the (London) *Mail On Sunday*.

"I'm really angry about this. It's not true and I aim to get to the bottom of it," Graham said. "I tend to leave Ricky alone after a fight, but I saw him a couple of times in Las Vegas and he never said anything to me about this. I would have been able to tell, if he was thinking about it. An American friend contacted me to tell me about stories that me and Ricky were going to split up, but they're definitely not true."

Hatton confirmed this himself before *The Mirror* ambushed him on holiday in Tenerife, where "a titanic booze bout" was described in detail by a news reporter who had posed as a fan: "Over four days, the Hitman drained Spain with a binge that would have floored all opponents. Ricky sank 57 pints, 17 vodka and Red Bulls, four vodkas, three whisky chasers, and a bottle of Moet champagne. But, displaying the scars from last month's Las Vegas welterweight defeat to Floyd Mayweather, he was still standing. Vowing to *The Mirror* that his fighting career was not over, he declared, 'You'll see me again in the ring. Unfortunately, I lost in Vegas, but that's the end of it.' Then the multi-millionaire joked, 'A few more drinks and I won't remember anyway.'"

Finally, another holiday on safari in South Africa culminated in what the (London) *Daily Star* described breathlessly as "a heart-stopping moment" when Hatton "cheated death after being attacked by an eight-ton elephant." Hatton and his family were in a Land Rover on a big game sightseeing ride when the elephant stopped them in the middle of the road. "We didn't have time to turn around [and] we were told not to make any sudden movements, but Richard sneezed and then the tusks came into the back," Ray Hatton, who manages his son's career, was quoted as saying. "It was squeaky bum time."

So when Hatton showed up in London for a lunch organized by the British Boxing Writers during the last week in February, his appearance and demeanor were reassuring. He wore a sharp suit, remained sober throughout, reported that he was back in training with Graham at the Betta Bodies Gym, and sported no scars from his encounter with Mayweather—or the elephant.

If the picture that had been created during the preceding couple of months suggested the sudden unraveling of his career, the 29-year-old world junior welterweight champion was quick to set the record straight. He announced that he would box on May 24 at the City of Manchester Stadium against THE RING's number-seven contender, California-based Mexican Juan Lazcano. Frank Maloney and the Hattons will promote the card, though Frank Warren, Hatton's former promoter, is skeptical that they will be able to attract a 30,000-strong crowd ("He *would* say that," Ray Hatton countered sarcastically). A three-fight

HBO deal will then kick in, beginning with a bout in the fall against IBF junior welterweight titleholder Paul Malignaggi, who will appear on the undercard in Manchester. Hatton-Malignaggi is likely to take place at Madison Square Garden, but Hatton wanted to put on a homecoming fight for his army of fans first.

"The HBO people said that they'd come in if we fought on May 3, the De La Hoya date, and they also said that they'd come in if we fought on May 31, but we told them that it would be a Brit-friendly date and we're not going to fight at 2 a.m., because this is our way of saying thanks to the fans who went across to support Richard in Vegas and those who have supported him his whole career," said Ray Hatton. "That's why we've delayed in signing the three-fight deal with HBO and we'll also be doing a deal with Golden Boy [who promoted Mayweather-Hatton]."

Given that an estimated 20,000 supporters were in Vegas for his fight with Mayweather, Hatton was unhappy that their ticket allocation amounted to only 3,900 out of 15,150 seats, though many more paid exorbitant sums to purchase tickets from scalpers.

"The way it was done was pretty bad really, it was a shame and that's why I want to come back and fight in Britain," he said. "Maybe there were British fight fans who thought I was never going to fight here again. Vegas was fantastic, but the thing that was disappointing was the [small] number of tickets that my fans got, so I insisted on coming back to say thank you to my fans. The way they've treated me since the defeat has cushioned the blow in many ways and this will probably be the biggest fight of my life. Sometimes when you get beat, especially by a knockout, it can go one way or the other, so we'll find out now just how good I am. I aim to bounce back and come back stronger and better than ever in a division in which I'm still the world champion."

Though Hatton's mood was jocular throughout the lunch, defiance of his critics laced everything that he said. While the supreme range of skills and ring intelligence of Mayweather proved, simply and brutally, too much to overcome, he declared that he would "be damned if the last fight of my career sees me going out flat on my back—that's not what I'm about." He accepted that Mayweather proved himself to be the better boxer and revealed that the subsequent weeks were "the worst time of my life," but he remained critical of the performance of referee Joe Cortez, whom he suggested "probably didn't have his best night".

"As much as Floyd won the fight, I think I lost it as well through getting frustrated," Hatton insisted. "But he's the best, pound-for-pound, and he's proved he's the best and, even if the referee had had a sensational night, I'd have still been up against it because Floyd is what he is. Maybe it was because of the [British fans'] booing of the [American] national anthem, but for whatever reason there was a difference in how he refereed my fight against Jose Luis Castillo and the fight with Mayweather. Before the fight my worst fear was that the referee might not let me fight, but then Cortez was appointed and I was over the moon. When I fought Castillo, there was a lot of close-quarter work and grappling, and he just let it go. But after the first 20 or 30 seconds against Floyd, I thought, *s___*. The politest way I can say this is that maybe he had an off-night. It wasn't just when the point got taken off [in the sixth round for hitting behind the head], Cortez' refereeing was eating away at me gradually as the fight went on. I got a little more frustrated and I stopped feinting and jinking and moving my head, and that was down to losing my cool.

"Maybe it's me looking for excuses and for somebody to blame, but I know I'd still have been up against it. If I was a referee and I was refereeing a British boxer in Manchester and 30,000 Americans came over and booed our national anthem, I'd get the hump a bit. For us here, it's a football mentality

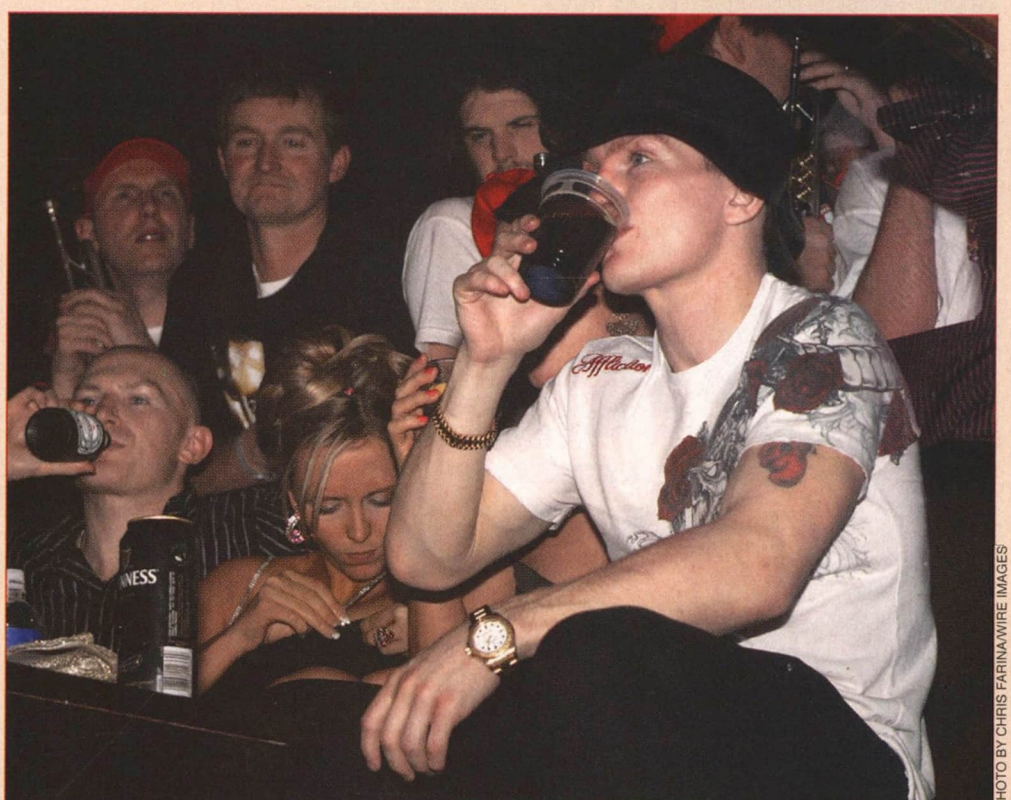


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/WIRE IMAGES

Hatton has a beer with friends following his kayo defeat to Mayweather. The British tabloids were filled with stories about Ricky's boozy ways, a lifestyle that could certainly catch up with the junior welterweight champion.

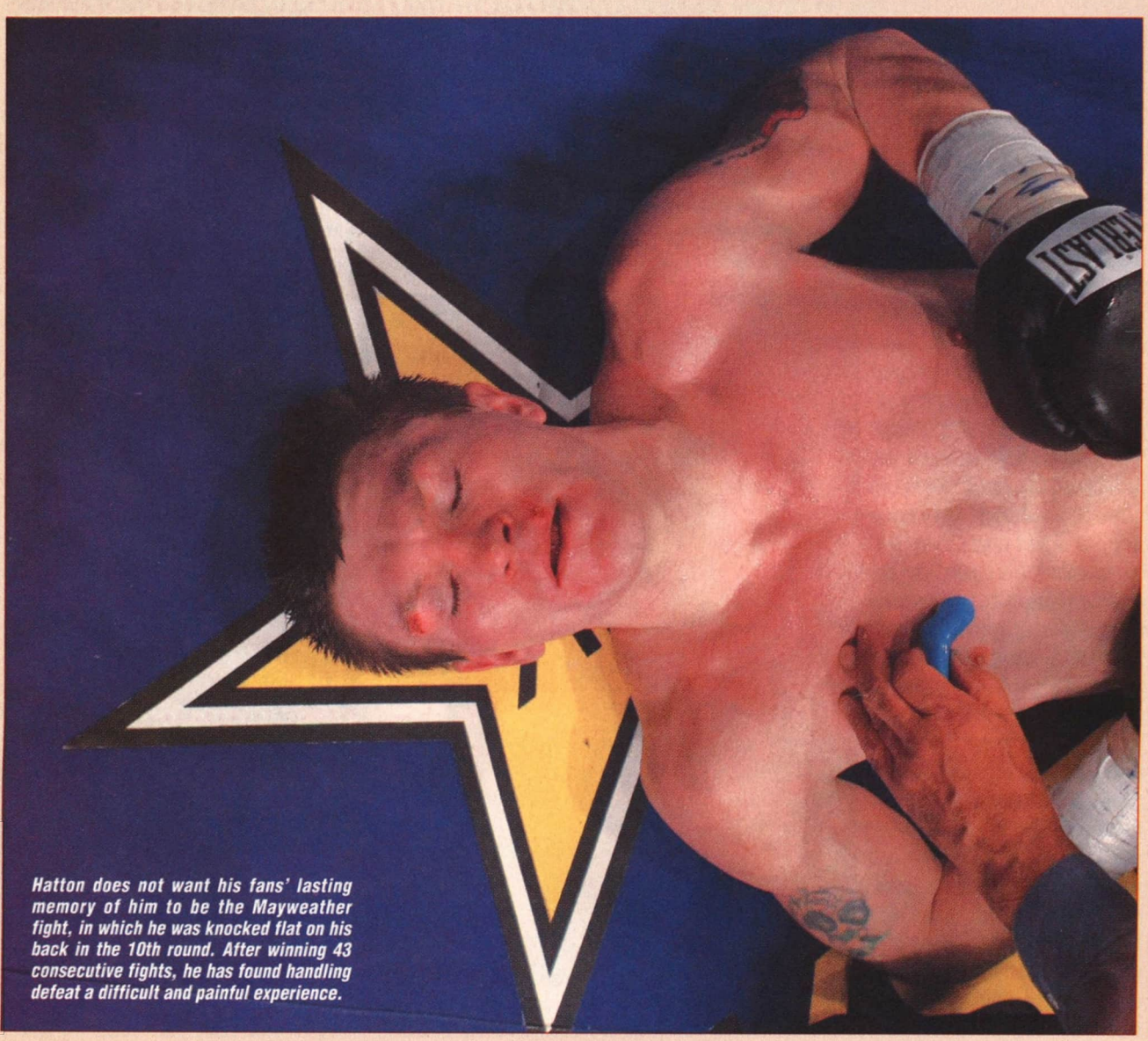
and [booing anthems] always tends to happen, sadly. I don't think it helped my case and, if the boot was on the other foot, I'd have been cheesed off.

"Floyd won the fight and that's all there is to it, and there's been moments for me when I pondered my first defeat and I felt depressed. If you take this game as serious as I take it and you get beat, you're going to be heartbroken and it hit me instantly. I was dead depressed. But I've had a few holidays and I've watched the tape and come through it. Life's great when everything's smooth, but you find out how good a fighter you are when you have to come back from a defeat."

Hatton intends to make a powerful statement against Lazcano, whom he was scheduled to fight in 2006 before injury forced the 33-year-old to be replaced at short notice by Luis Collazo. But will Hatton, 43-1 (31), be able to bounce back emphatically from such a heavy defeat as he suffered against Mayweather? Will his lifestyle, which is monastic only when he commits himself to training camp, shortly catch up with him? Can a fighter who has not boxed for 15 months since losing to Vivian Harris (whom THE RING's number-one junior welterweight contender, Junior Witter, subsequently knocked out) provide an accurate barometer of Hatton's present ability? Will a bout with fellow Briton Witter happen soon, or will it happen at all?

"You know, I don't need Junior Witter; Junior Witter needs me," Hatton said. "I'm not dismissing the fight. You can never say never, but while he's been fighting Harris and DeMarcus Corley, I've been fighting Kostya Tszyu, Jose Luis Castillo, and Floyd Mayweather, the best fighter on the planet. I've also drawn about 40,000 people in total across the Atlantic to watch me fight, and he can't draw 1,500 to his hometown in Bradford, so let's put it into perspective.

"I got called a hypocrite [in Britain's *Boxing News* for not making a match with Witter], but the last thing I'd like to think I am is a hypocrite. I've conducted myself the way a fighter should. I've never slagged off an opponent, I've never said a bad word, and I've fought some of the best pound-for-pound fighters in the world. I'd like to think that British fight fans can't point a



Hatton does not want his fans' lasting memory of him to be the Mayweather fight, in which he was knocked flat on his back in the 10th round. After winning 43 consecutive fights, he has found handling defeat a difficult and painful experience.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Hatton will be taking on Juan Lazcano in his first comeback fight, scheduled for May 24 at the City of Manchester Stadium, an outdoors soccer venue that can seat more than 50,000. Lazcano is pictured digging a left to Steve Johnston's body en route to a TKO victory in 2003.

finger at me. I'm not saying the fight won't happen, but it will happen when I want and if I want. It's not a fear thing. I've fulfilled my side of the bargain. He's slagged me off and said that I'm avoiding him and I don't want to fight him. Well, I'm actually the one who's fought everyone, and he's not really fought anyone, and as well as Junior has looked lately, he needs to fight a few more people—and in front of a few more people would help too."

Hatton's father revealed that substantive discussions about a Hatton-Witter bout have never taken place.

"We've had a phone call when we were sat on a beach in Tenerife from Mick Hennessy [Witter's promoter]," Hatton Senior acknowledged. "He said, 'Now that Junior's won the WBC title it must be a 50-50 split.' You're left laughing and that ain't the way to do it. We've never sat down at a table to discuss it properly. We've just had a phone call, 'How about the fight? How about this percentage and that percentage?'

Hatton's lawyer, Gareth Williams, made a lowball offer of a £100,000 purse, which Hennessy predictably turned down.

"All right," said Ray Hatton, "it was an insult and I hold my hands up, but it was more money than he's had for any of his fights before. If you're making statements like, 'I'll fight somebody for nothing' and then you offer somebody, even though it is an insult, bigger money than he's ever fought for before and they turn it down blank and want 30 percent of everything, let's have it right."

While Witter was left searching for an opponent when Demetrius Hopkins pulled out of a proposed March date on HBO, Hatton has a clear strategy, just as he had during the 18 months preceding his bout with Mayweather. So what of the next 18 months? Has Hatton, who will turn 30 in October, formulated an exit strategy?

"I don't like putting a timeframe on it because before the Mayweather fight I still believed I was an improving fighter," Hatton said. "I'm not going to say that I have another 18 months or two years or any length of time, but I've gone past my wildest dreams really. It's always been about the challenge for me. I'm not putting any number of fights on it. I'm just taking it as it goes. I've had 44 fights and, realistically, I'm not going to go on a great deal longer, but I'd rather not put a time limit on it. I have an HBO contract for three fights, however, so we'll see how it goes."

What we see on May 24 against Lazcano, 37-4-1 (27), will tell us much about Hatton's future. We know that he is not a welterweight but, at 140 pounds, can he still reign supreme? Probably, but the beating to which he was subjected by Mayweather means that there are no guarantees.

"Arturo Gatti came back from defeat several times and Marco Antonio Barrera's done it too. They even bounced back stronger," Hatton said. "Sometimes when you get knocked out it's hard to bounce back, and some fighters don't. Naseem Hamed wasn't able to. He had one more fight after losing to Barrera and then he walked away. But defeat has given me a new incentive. Naz should be remembered for all the fantastic fights he had and all that he achieved, but some people might remember him for the way that he bailed out of the game. I don't want that to happen to me, so that will be my motivation now." ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

THRILLOGY!

Should Vazquez And Marquez Go For Four Of A Kind?

By Ivan Goldman
PHOTOS BY JAN SANDERS

Postfight magazine stories, like clever boxers, present angles. For example, they focus on what the winner must do next to further his career or perhaps whether the quicker clock of athletic time will allow him one or two more great victories. But every once in a while you see two magnificent adversaries in a contest that was even finer than anyone could hope for—a masterful war between two uniquely courageous athletes, and it's appropriate to stand back and just acknowledge straight-on the excellence of the fighters and what they did.

Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez III was such a fight. And Marquez-Vazquez was such a trilogy. Twenty-four-and-a-half-rounds without a lull, without a silly punch or a break in the intensity or even a tuneup between fights, all of which were fought within a span of 12 months.

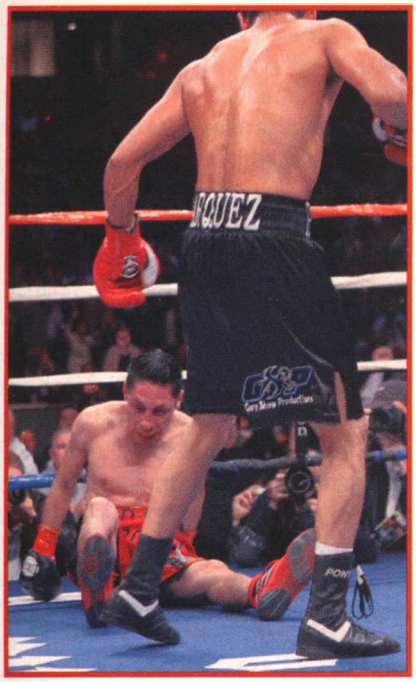
Even in their third meeting, after two action-packed contests, the two finest junior featherweights on Earth earned only a fraction of what two world-class heavyweights made the previous week, when Wladimir Klitschko jabbed his way to a dull, safety-first victory over Sultan Ibragimov. But fans know who earned their money and who didn't. That's why the 8,104 spectators at the sold-out Home Depot Center in Carson, California, spontaneously rose to their feet and applauded as the two little giants came out of their corners for the 12th and final round. The

fans knew what they'd just seen. And however it came out in the win-loss column, no matter which man they'd favored before the bout began, they knew that whatever transpired during the next three minutes, nothing could detract from this fight, from this trilogy of transcendentally splendid fights.

Though Marquez and Vazquez have found a special place in the hearts of knowledgeable fans, they won't ever make the cover of *People* magazine and their halting English will keep them off late-night talk shows, even if anyone producing those shows noticed the existence of junior feathers, which is doubtful. The two Mexico City natives might well attract mainstream coverage if they would, like Floyd Mayweather, holler obscenities and contemptuously toss hundred-dollar bills at their fans or, like Ricardo Mayorga, insult the virtue of their opponents' wives. But Vazquez and Marquez are too well centered to scratch the general public's itch for vulgarity or to demean themselves or others for pay. They prefer to just train hard and then, at the opening bell, to fight like the devil, to battle through the pain and adversity, ignoring the weariness that must come, and execute with furious, split-second precision what they practice day after day in the gym.

Other opponents would succumb to the relentless pressure each applies to the other, but they know too well that this

The incredibly intense action never flagged, and each man took turns landing terrific punches. Marquez' left hook (above) was a potent weapon, but it was Vazquez' right hand (below) that ultimately proved the most damaging.



Marquez floors Vazquez in the fourth, which turned into a Round of the Year candidate when Vazquez beat the count and charged back to rock Marquez.

man across from them will just come back with shots of his own, so they must find a way to be smarter and tougher than the frustrating mirror image of their own determination and skill.

At the final bell, Vazquez was in control and came away with a split decision that seemed fair. "It was very, very close," said Brian Little, matchmaker for Main Events, which had no part of the promotion. "But yeah, I thought Vazquez won." Not surprisingly, both fighters expressed a willingness to go at it again, and the financial facts may well make that happen.

"If you look back at the '50s, and before that, it wasn't uncommon for guys to fight each other four and five times," noted Carl Moretti, matchmaker for DiBella Entertainment, which also has no stake in either fighter. "You could sure argue a fourth fight is justified. It's probably the biggest fight for both guys anyway."

Yet there are two good reasons to stop the series after three. First, battles like theirs have to take a tremendous toll on the combatants. The way they match up, both warriors appear destined always for a hard night against each other. After their last 12 rounds, they looked like they'd been hit by the same bus. Also, Vazquez, who retained THE

Marquez unloads with a right hand that splits Vazquez' guard. There were so many changes in fortune, neither man could gain the advantage for long. The result was an all-time classic that will never been forgotten by those who witnessed it.

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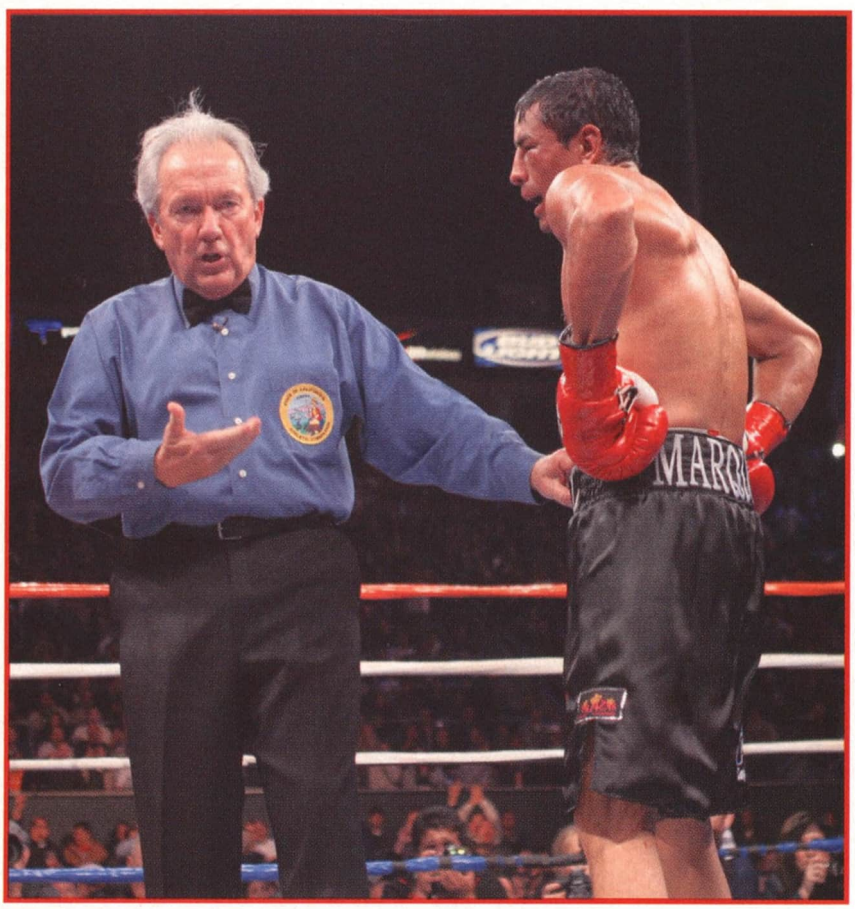
It Doesn't Get Any Better

They didn't swing for the fences in round one, but it was no feeling-out round either, as Israel Vazquez and Rafael Marquez tested each other with frequent, ramrod jabs. Near the end, Marquez scored with unanswered, hard combinations.

The war started really heating up in the next two rounds. It seemed every punch came straight out of the experts' manual—leveraged, sharp, accurate, and usually thrown in combination. Vazquez, rattled by a barrage of rights, hit the canvas in round four, which will be a candidate for Round of the Year. It was the first time Vazquez went down in the series. He bounced up, and when referee Pat Russell signaled them to resume, Vazquez, 122, furiously waded in, backing up a startled Marquez. But by the end of the round, Marquez, 121, was in ascendance. Each time you thought you understood who was imposing his will, the other fighter proved you wrong.

By the middle rounds Vazquez' face was puffy from the nonstop action, his eyes red from seeping cuts. Marquez had a large red mark in the middle of his forehead. He was driven to the ropes in the sixth round, but kept throwing hard shots as he retreated. By round seven Marquez's left eye was just about closed, and Vazquez was taking advantage with overhand rights. But Marquez tagged him with a huge left uppercut. Vazquez ended round eight with a big straight right. Marquez wobbled Vazquez with a vicious combination at the end of round nine. When Marquez, who'd been warned at least twice, struck Vazquez low again in the 10th, Russell deducted a point. Vazquez appeared to be gaining ground in the 11th.



Russell penalizes Marquez for punching low

Round 12, which was preceded by a standing ovation, started with a huge exchange that included a straight right from Vazquez that sent Marquez into retreat. Though still punching, Marquez was weakening and circling, initiating several clinches. Vazquez, who'd come out for the final round "like crisp lettuce," manager Frank Espinoza would say later, knocked Marquez back to the ropes with a pair of lefts that landed flush. Russell was watching closely, poised to stop it when Marquez fell back and grabbed the ropes to stay on his feet. Instead, Russell jumped in and called the knockdown. Marquez protested, and as the crowd roared, the fight-ending bell sounded.

Judge Max De Luca scored it 114-111 Vazquez, Tom Kaczmarek 114-111 for Marquez, and James Jen Kin 113-112 for Vazquez. Were there no point deduction, it would have been a draw. THE RING had it 114-112, Vazquez.

—I.G.

RING 122-pound world championship and an alphabet title with his victory, can't give other fighters a chance if he's always fighting the same opponent.

Whatever the future holds, fans in this first decade of the 21st century were privileged to see a trilogy that might be matched but won't be exceeded. And that's true if you look forward *or* back, because though some graybeards will still maintain that fighters 50, 60, or 70 years ago were tougher and better, Marquez and Vazquez showed that unless those previous fighters were members of another species, that can't be so.

If the spirit of this trilogy could be implanted into heavyweight form, you'd end up with something like Muhammad Ali vs. Joe Frazier, except that for all its savage beauty, the Ali-Frazier series included a non-eventful stinker in between the two wars.

"You look at other trilogies—even

at [Marco Antonio] Barrera and [Erik] Morales, the second one goes down a little in excitement and then it picks up in the third fight," said Frank Espinoza, Vazquez' manager. "On this one, each fight got even better. I think this was the best trilogy ever."

The second battle, which ended with Vazquez' sixth-round TKO of Marquez, was THE RING's 2007 Fight of the Year. Round three of that fight was Round of the Year. Yet the third bout—the only one of the three to be decided by the judges' scorecards—could be judged superior to the others simply because the nonstop action lasted a full 12 rounds. And, like the others, its outcome was in doubt all the way to the end. The tiebreaker also featured a spectacular finish when Marquez fell into the ropes under a barrage of punches that referee Pat Russell correctly called a knockdown.

"I was so happy he didn't stop the fight, which he could have," said experienced California official Marty Denkin. "When a guy grabs the ropes and is laying back like that, Pat has two choices: stop the fight or call it a knockdown."

In the 12th and final round, with the fight in the balance, Vazquez hurt Marquez with a series of headshots (above), driving him into a corner, where the stricken boxer was prevented from going down by the ropes (below). Referee Pat Russell correctly ruled it a knockdown.

As in the other contests, Team Marquez felt it advantageous to try keeping Vazquez at the end of Rafael's jab, and Team Vazquez looked to fight closer. But Vazquez also had a great jab, and Marquez was definitely not helpless on the inside. There was no safety in that ring. Both men mixed up their punches, sometimes leading, sometimes countering, and often countering the counter. Whichever fighter got slammed with a big shot would generally respond either with ferocity or stoic acknowledgement.

It's possible Vazquez, who had more left in round 12, was better conditioned, but it's more likely his opponent grew weaker because he was getting hit with big shots he couldn't see. Though Vazquez, who cuts easily and often, was already getting busted up after round one, it was Marquez whose left eye was closed in the later rounds, making him easy prey for Vazquez' overhand rights.

"We kept telling him, 'Throw your jab, move right, and throw the overhand right. He can't see it,'" said Espinoza, who praised Las Vegas cutman Miguel Diaz for maintaining vision in Vazquez' tortured eyes. Just in case, Espinoza had L.A. cutman Joe Chavez working the corner too. "Let me tell you," Espinoza said, "I was shocked to see Marquez' corner working on him with ice and their fingers. They had no Enswell (a widely used instrument that's basically frozen metal). Look carefully at the fight tape and you won't see any towels in that corner either. I made sure Israel had everything."

Before the series began, Marquez, 37-5 (33), was the better known of the two. Celebrated for his freakish power, he was listed on THE RING's top 10 pound-for-pound list. But when Vazquez, 43-4 (31), punched his way out of obscurity, he was recognized as someone who could give Marquez trouble. By their third faceoff, Vazquez, on the strength of his previous victory, earned $800,000 to Marquez's $400,000. And now as the two of them look around for a better payday, they may wind up looking at each other again, particularly if they continue to campaign at 122 pounds. It's difficult to come up with any other fighters below 130 who can draw a crowd. And Marquez in particular can't afford to be coy. He's already 33, and time has a way of moving faster in the lower weight divisions.

Espinoza hopes Vazquez, 30, has accomplished enough by now to attract pay-per-view TV money. When asked about it, Vazquez' manager conceded that his fighter has no contractual obligations to continue with Showtime, though he didn't want anyone to think he was eager to jump ship. "We feel comfortable with Showtime," he said. But HBO, which has more subscribers and a fatter budget, has a history of enticing defections among some of Showtime's more promising and popular fighters—Joe Calzaghe and Ricky Hatton, for example. If a fourth contest takes place and it goes to pay-per-view, whichever network is willing to throw more resources into the promotion would have a leg up in negotiations.

Al Bernstein, who called the fight for Showtime, reflected the feelings of many when he said the contest itself was so remarkable he wasn't terribly concerned with what the scorecards might say. But as time passes and memories fade, victory and defeat become more solid, with no asterisks to mark extenuating circumstances. Still, for the time being, it makes sense to forget about all that and just savor what we all saw. ■

Ivan Goldman, THE RING's West Coast correspondent, was ringside in Carson, California, for Vazquez-Marquez III.

What's Next?

Vazquez fought his heart out to retain THE RING belt

The best-known junior featherweight after Marquez and Vazquez is hard-hitting, third-ranked Daniel Ponce De Leon of Mexico, who's is scheduled to fight Puerto Rican Juan Manuel Lopez, June 7 on the Kelly Pavlik-Gary Lockett card in Atlantic City. It's a shame Ponce De Leon didn't fight number-two contender Celestino Caballero as originally planned, because a winner of that bout would have gained enough visibility to make a match against Vazquez or Marquez a major attraction.

At featherweight, there's fast-rising Robert Guerrero, who's dangerous but relatively unknown. If he had Marquez or Vazquez in his promotional stable, said matchmaker Carl Moretti, he wouldn't "be necessarily jumping in there with Guerrero," whose last fight took place in a ballroom. Accomplished featherweights Chris John of Indonesia and Steve Molitor of Canada are mostly just names to U.S. fans.

"Israel wants to move up to 126," said his manager, Frank Espinoza, "but he has no problem making 122." And Marquez was campaigning at 118 less than two years ago, making a match at 126 even less palatable for him.

Other names being thrown around were Manny Pacquiao and Juan Manuel Marquez, both full-fledged stars, but both fighting at 130. "Pacquiao's talking about going to 135 or 140," said Moretti. "I don't think you'll see him competing at 126." Juan Manuel Marquez vs. Israel Vazquez could be a creative promotion if it were advertised as Juan Manuel's attempt to avenge his brother's two losses to Vazquez. But the size factor would again come into play.

It's debatable whether Rafael and Vazquez would suffer more damage against each other or against larger men. In the meantime, both fighters rested as their teams mulled the possibilities.

—I.G.

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A HAUNTING PRESENCE

"Ghost" Guerrero Sneaks Up On The Elite

By William Dettloff
PHOTOS BY JAN SANDERS

There are things that can sneak up on even the most considered life. A potbelly. Middle age. Cynicism. A bald spot, if it's toward the back far enough. Late fees. Creeping senility. You can see how that last one happens, especially. If you don't remember what you're forgetting, how do you know you've forgotten it?

There's not much sneaking going on in the boxing business, unless you count all the back-door shenanigans that keep the governing bodies going. That's because, like all sports, this game is largely show business, and in show business it is universally understood that there is no such thing as bad press; there's only press. Exposure is everything. If you don't believe us, consider as a case study the storied career of Mike Tyson. There wasn't a kind word written or spoken about him for probably the last 10 years he was fighting, and in that time he made more money than you would see if you made time-and-a-half for the next 300 years.

It's called getting the word out, and few approach the task with the zeal of those in the fight business. Boxing agents and publicists would e-mail the world if they could, and it wouldn't have to be about anything very important. John Ruiz went 40 straight seconds without grabbing and holding on to his sparring partner? Send an e-mail. Kelly Pavlik hired a handyman to replace his kitchen cabinets? Send an e-mail. Lennox Lewis said something interesting? Well, we won't get crazy. Let's just say if it ever happens, you can bet Lewis' publicist will be all over it.

Guerrero was simply too good for brave challenger Litzau, who was forced to absorb a steady beating from the southpaw titleholder. The bout was "The Ghost's" second defense of his second reign as IBF featherweight boss and pushed him to the top of THE RING's 126-pound ratings.

It is in this environment that Robert "The Ghost" Guerrero has managed to sneak up on not only the rest of the featherweight division, but on the stars right below him at junior feather and those right above at junior lightweight. This may seem an odd route to take to describe what the 25-year-old Guerrero has done. After all, he's fought five times on *ShoBox*, and on an HBO Pay-Per-View telecast (Floyd Mayweather's win over Carlos Baldomir). He has a very prolific and e-mail-happy publicist in Mario Serrano, one of the sport's bigger promoters in Dan Goossen, and his wife's leukemia diagnosis has made him a sympathetic favorite of West Coast sportswriters. Most pugs would kill for the exposure he has gotten. If that's not enough, he's THE RING's number-one rated 126-pounder and has been in the top 10 for more than a year.

Still, even as he was favored going into his meeting in early-March against the flashier, more charismatic Jason Litzau, whom he stopped in eight fairly

Although he was ultimately outclassed, Litzau didn't go down without a fight. "The American Boy" scored well with his right hand from time to time, but could never really hurt Guerrero or turn the bout in his favor. Even so, Litzau fought with courage and earned every penny of his purse.

bloody and mostly exciting rounds (on *ShoBox* again), one got an odd sense about him. He seemed to emerge quite suddenly as the dark horse of the group of guys that are mixing it up between 122 and 130 pounds, many of whom are stars, in whose company he seems to fit, more or less, and from whose various warring he could emerge as a heck of a featherweight champion.

"I'm hoping to get a big fight. I'd like to unify the titles," Guerrero told THE RING a few days after beating Litzau. "I'd love to fight [Rafael] Marquez or [Israel] Vazquez or [Manny] Pacquiao, or [Juan Manuel] Marquez," he said. There has been discussion, Goossen told THE RING, with the handlers of fellow titleholder Steve Luevano, hot prospect Jorge Linares, and even Daniel Ponce De Leon, whom, Goossen says, he has been trying to get Guerrero for years.

There was a time not too terribly long ago when it looked like Guerrero's sprint toward, at best, medium-range featherweight success had stalled. First came an unexpected loss to Gamaliel Diaz in December '05. After avenging the loss with a six-round kayo and then winning the IBF belt by stopping Eric Aiken, he was outhustled and outfought by an oddly energetic and invigorated Orlando Salido. When postfight testing found the cause of Salido's rejuvenation to be illegal, performance-enhancing drugs, the result was changed to a no-contest and Guerrero traveled to Copenhagen, Denmark, where he stopped Spend Abazi in nine rounds to reclaim the IBF strap. We should have known then that The Ghost was a keeper. Winning on the road is not easy in this business.

"What can I say, my back was against the wall," Guerrero said of the Abazi fight. "Getting acclimated to the time change and weather was the biggest challenge. My manager had experience fighting overseas with other fighters and gave me some good advice. He told me to go to sleep right when we got there. That made a huge difference because we jumped right into their time pattern.

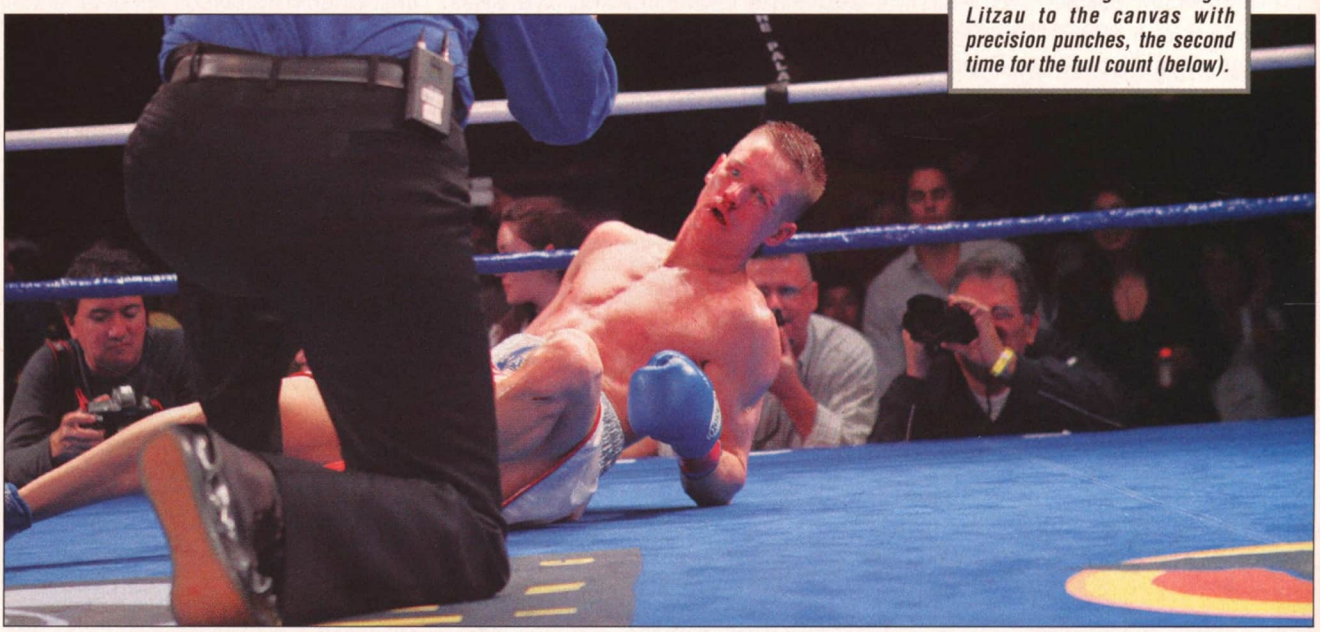
"Regarding the fight, I felt I needed a knockout to win. I wasn't going to leave it up to the judges. Nothing was going to stop me from winning that fight. My wife gave birth to my son while I was there. I had a ton of emotions running through my head, but I did what I had to do and brought the title back home. It was incredible."

Guerrero's stoppage of Litzau was his second defense of the IBF belt. In November '07, the Gilroy, California, resident blasted out the highly rated Martin Honorio in the first round. The win over Litzau was nearly as impressive, but for a different reason: Guerrero changed his strategy mid-fight, from that of onrushing clubber to patient counterpuncher. The change discombobulated Litzau, who had been taking a beating but was still in the fight until Guerrero's pinpoint counter shots put him down for the count at 2:25 of the eighth round.

"I'm a boxer-puncher and the strategy we had was to make our

Guerrero and Spend Abazi pose together following their February 2007 bout in Copenhagen, Denmark, for the vacant IBF featherweight title. Guerrero figured he had to score a knockout to take the belt in his foe's hometown, which he did, stopping Abazi in the ninth round.

PHOTO BY LARS MOELLER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



The versatile Guerrero closed the show in the eighth round, twice blasting challenger Litzau to the canvas with precision punches, the second time for the full count (below).

presence felt as the champ, and that's what we did," said Guerrero. "Then we changed the game plan, and he fell apart pretty quickly."

Guerrero, 22-1-1 (15), established himself as the stronger fighter right away and backed up Litzau from the opening bell. Over the first several rounds, he concentrated on digging hard lefts into Litzau's rib cage. Guerrero, a southpaw, appeared the far more mature of the two, if not the flashier offensively. He chased Litzau, St. Paul, Minnesota, around the ring, but at the same time very adeptly slipped or ducked much of what was thrown back at him. Litzau, 23-2 (19), simply couldn't land as much as he wanted to, and when he did, the blows had little effect on Guerrero.

Litzau, 125, enjoyed maybe his best round of the fight in the sixth when he turned his hands loose inside and caught Guerrero with some of the best punches of the night. It was after that round that Guerrero's head trainer, his father, Ruben, suggested a change in strategy.

"I was slugging too much and getting carried away with powerpunches," Guerrero said. "I was tensed up and overexcited. I was trying to put too much on my punches instead of just relaxing. My dad told me to change it up and box a little, to take a half-step back."

The strategy worked perfectly. A counter left uppercut followed by a straight left dropped Litzau for a short count with two minutes left in the round. Showing the patience and poise of a veteran, Guerrero, 126, didn't rush in for the knockout. He waited for Litzau to reach in again with the right. Eventually he did, and Guerrero raked him with a right hook, a left, and a final right hook that dropped a bloodied

Guerrero hopes that the TV exposure he's received of late, combined with his knockout streak, will result in a major pay-per-view fight with one of the big names fighting between 122 and 130 pounds. Like so many fighters, Guerrero also has a compelling personal story.

Litzau to the canvas, where referee David Mendoza counted him out.

Guerrero is quick to praise his father, but it wasn't always that way. Ruben, a former fighter himself, trained Guerrero from the time Guerrero first put on the gloves, at age nine, through the amateurs and 11 fights into his pro career. Then they decided a change was needed, as Guerrero said, to get "experience with some elite trainers." Guerrero trained for several years with Joe Goossen, with his father as an assistant, and also with Freddie Roach. He's been back with his father as head trainer for about a year and is pleased with the results.

"He knows me like the back of his hand. He knows what to do with me. Now that I've gone back to my roots, I'm much sharper and on my toes more. He knows me better than anyone," Guerrero said. "There's no ego clashing. A lot of the time father-son teams don't work out. But we don't have that ego problem that a lot of fathers and sons do. In the gym, he treats me like a fighter. And I treat him like a coach. Outside, it's father and son. We have a good time together."

Guerrero has needed those good times as a counterweight to the stress of his wife's diagnosis. At this writing, her cancer is said to be in remission and her prognosis is good, but one never knows how these things will play out. The couple has two young children. It is with some irony that Guerrero notes that as hard as the situation has been, it's been a positive for his career.

"It shows what types of people fighters are," he said. "We're not just guys that beat people up—we're normal people that come home to families and take care of them. And it's not just good for my career; it's good for the sport. It shows what kind of personalities fighters have."

Guerrero is not the most charismatic or photogenic guy around his weight. He looks a bit like an impish Bruce Springsteen with bigger ears. He lacks Pacquiao's firepower and Vazquez' reckless courage. He doesn't have the classical skills of either of the Marquez brothers. There's something about him that tells you he's a full level below those guys, and that he probably should stay away from Linares for a while, and maybe even Luevano. At the same time, there is no denying he's all fighter.

"The ring is a place where I can go and step in and nothing else matters," he said. "It's a job, but if you don't enjoy what you do, you shouldn't be doing it. I enjoy it and do it to the best ability that I can. I like to fight. I like to exchange punches and lay some leather down."

It may be that Guerrero is not on the same level as the stars of the junior feather and lightweight divisions. Certainly there's no shame in that. Pacquiao, Vasquez, and the Marquez brothers all are in THE RING's pound-for-pound top 10. But there could be a place for him among them. You never know. He's gotten this far. He just may sneak up on a few more people before he's done. ■

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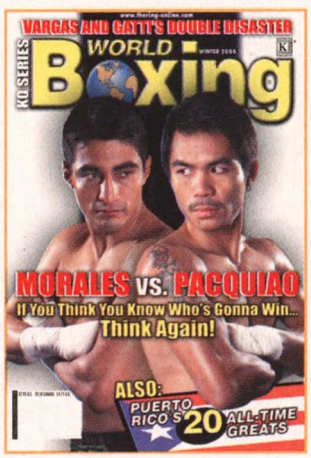

Winter 2006

Juan Meza.

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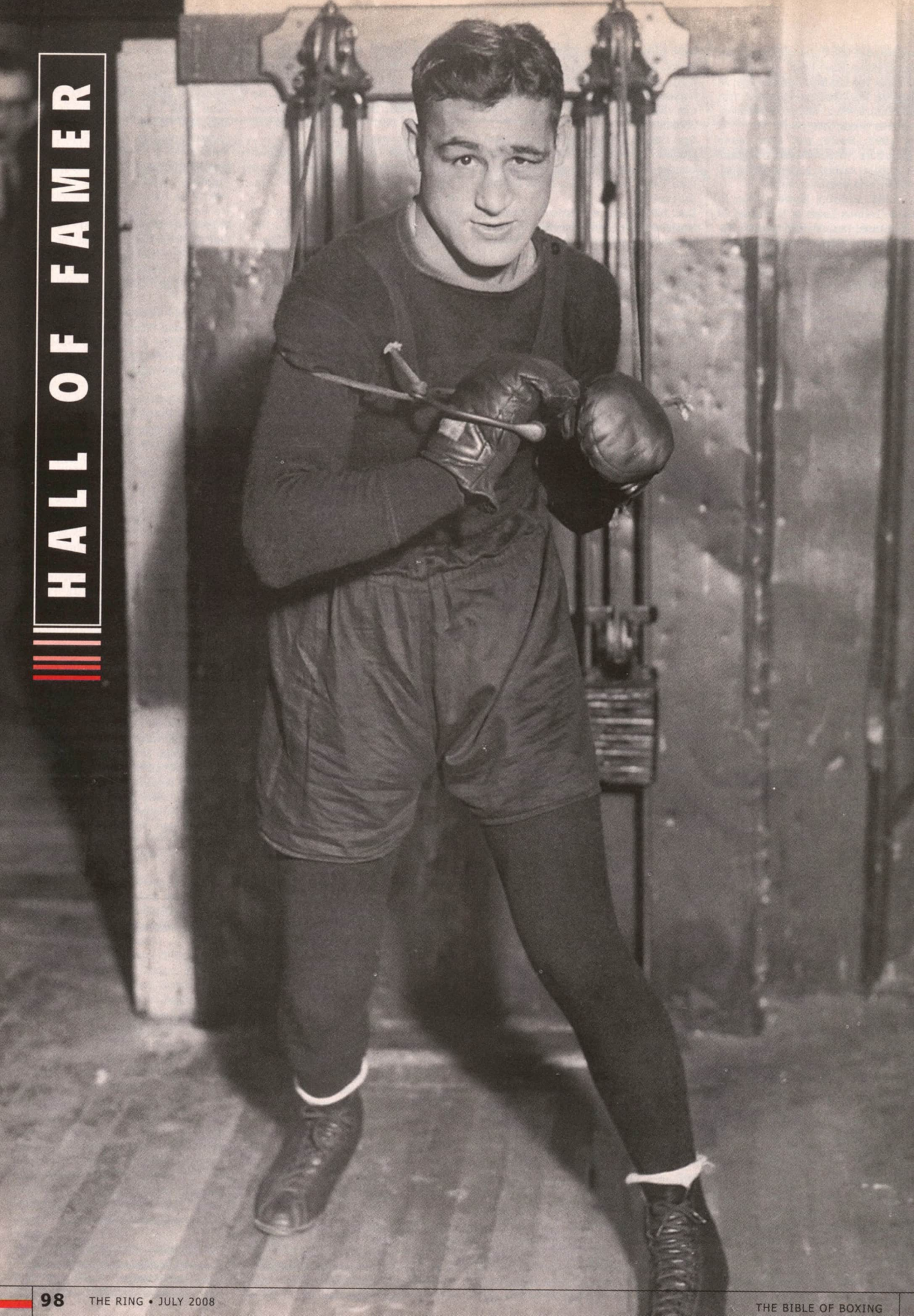


HALL OF FAMER

BILLY PETROLLE

Why The Fargo Express Never Made A Championship Stop

By Pete Ehrmann

"Greed for gold may bring an abrupt ending to the fighting career of Billy Petrolle, who, instead of living up to his famous nickname, 'The Fargo Express,' is beginning to resemble a slow local."

—The Milwaukee Journal, May 4, 1928

"Billy Petrolle, The Fargo Express, has proved beyond a shadow of doubt that he is the outstanding contender in the lightweight, junior welter, and welterweight divisions, and he could rightly be heralded the miracle man of the age."

—THE RING, March 1932

Whether sportswriters were shaking their heads in disapproval or wonderment made little difference to Billy Petrolle. The only person he paid attention to where his ring career was concerned was his manager, Jack Hurley.

"I don't listen to these outside advisors anymore," Petrolle said in explaining the difference in him between 1928 and 1932. "They had me believing one time that I was all through, but Hurley convinced me that all I needed was a good, long rest.

"His word is law with me. When he says 'train,' I

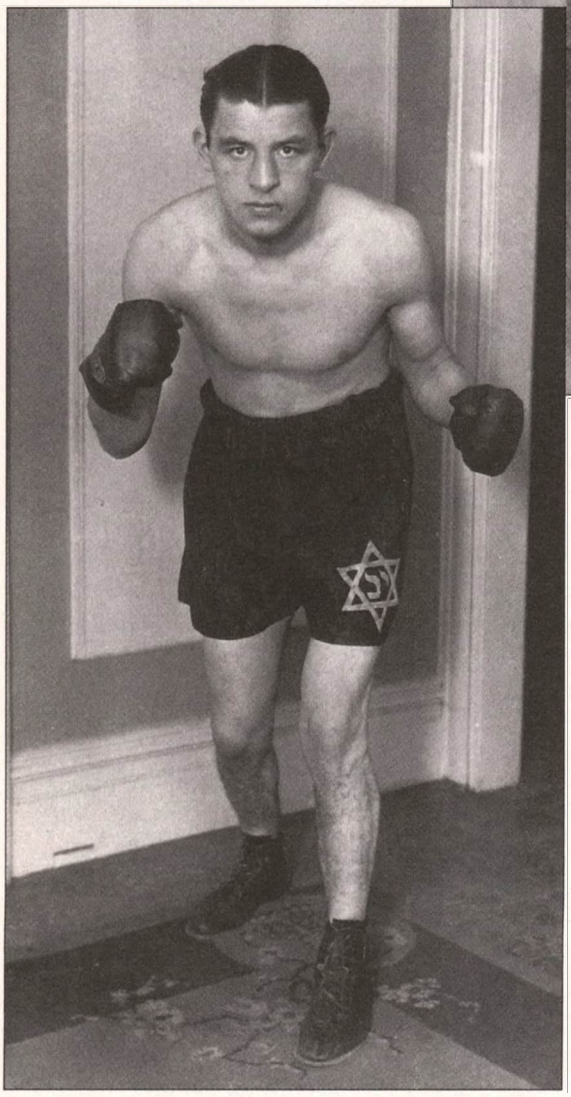
train. When he says 'fight,' I fight."

It was how Jack Hurley taught Petrolle to fight, and Petrolle's unwavering belief and trust in Hurley that made them one of the most unique and successful duos in boxing history, and landed Petrolle in the International Boxing Hall of Fame even though he never won a world title.

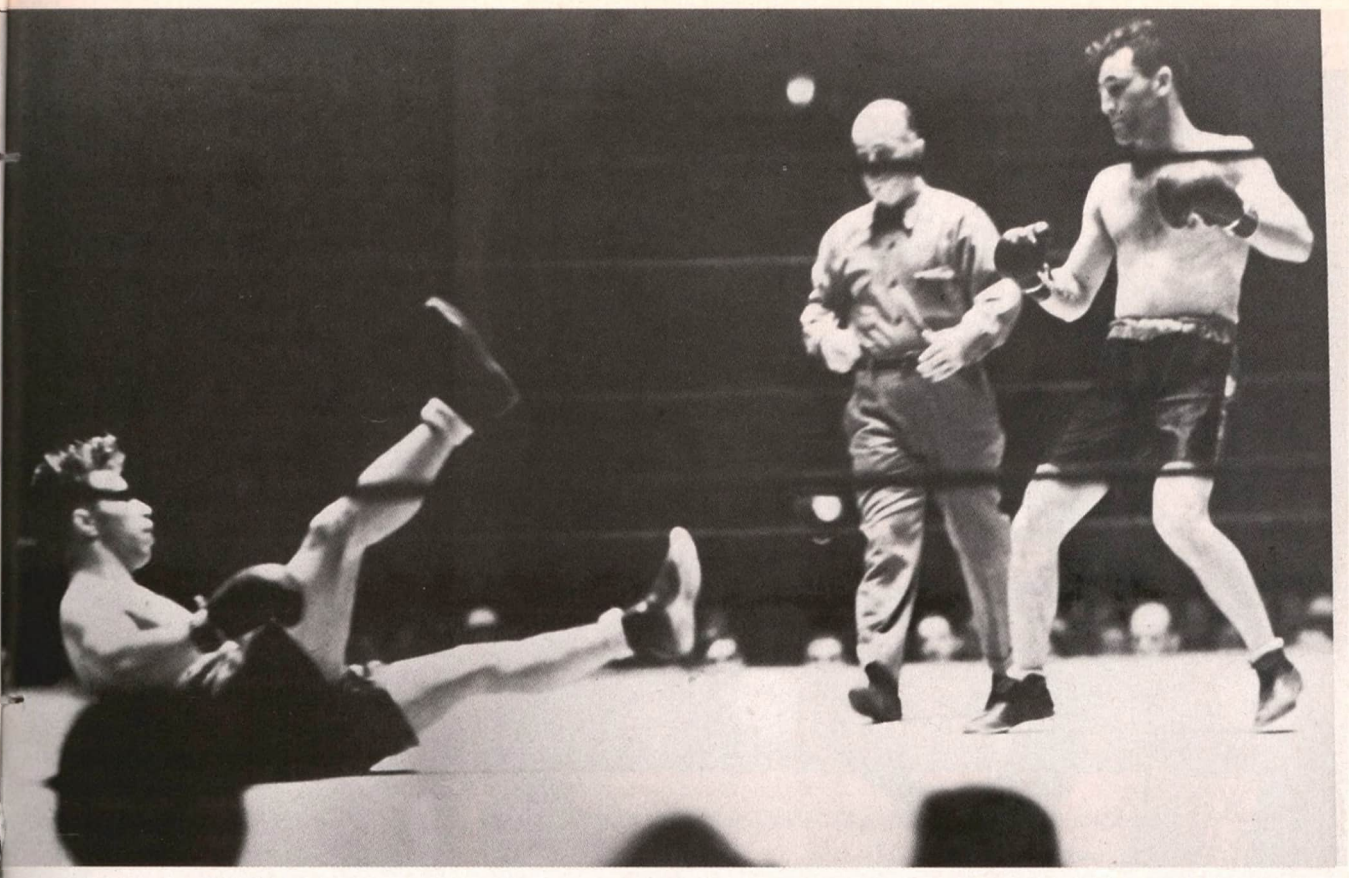
Their partnership started in Fargo, North Dakota, Hurley's hometown. Petrolle moved there when he was a boy. His parents came from Italy, and Petrolle's dad worked for the railroad in Berwick, Pennsylvania, when Billy was born there on January 10, 1905. That's what Billy did in Fargo after dropping out of school in the seventh grade. He also started fighting.

Hurley had tried boxing too, but was too spindly for it. "Then I got the idea of using the talents of others," he later recalled to sportswriter W.C. Heinz. "I

The fighter and the talker: Petrolle and manager Jack Hurley check the newspapers for fight news. Even though their relationship got off to a rocky start, the pair stayed together throughout Petrolle's 11-year pro career and split every purse 50-50.



Petrolle has a three-fight series (1-1-1) with Jackie "Kid" Berg, the popular Englishman known as "The Whitechapel Whirlwind." Petrolle became the first to kayo Berg when he stopped him in the fifth round of a 1928 bout in Chicago.



Petrolle watches King Tut hit the floor during their February 27, 1931, bout in New York. Just 25 days earlier, Tut had kayoed "The Fargo Express" in one round, but Petrolle avenged the defeat by scoring a fourth-round kayo in the rematch.

figured that if I could get half a dozen kids and get them each a fight a month, I could make more money than if I was fighting myself."

He was promoting in Fargo in the early-1920s when Hurley saw Petrolle and offered him $80 to fight on one of his cards. Petrolle accepted, but his opponent didn't show, and Hurley would only fork over $10. They didn't speak for a year, until Hurley approached Petrolle and said he wanted to manage him. First Petrolle made him pony up the $70 he owed him, and then handed half of it back to Hurley. Everything they did from then on was strictly 50-50.

The way Petrolle saw it, there was an equal division of labor. "I do the fighting for this combination and Hurley does the talking," he would say.

Hurley more than held up his end. Never above pure gimmickry, Hurley toned it down with Petrolle (though he did dig up an Indian blanket for the fighter to wear into the ring instead of a robe, and told reporters it was presented to Petrolle by a famous Indian chief) and concentrated on developing what writer Jack Olsen called the "brink-of-disaster style" that made Petrolle so popular with fight fans.

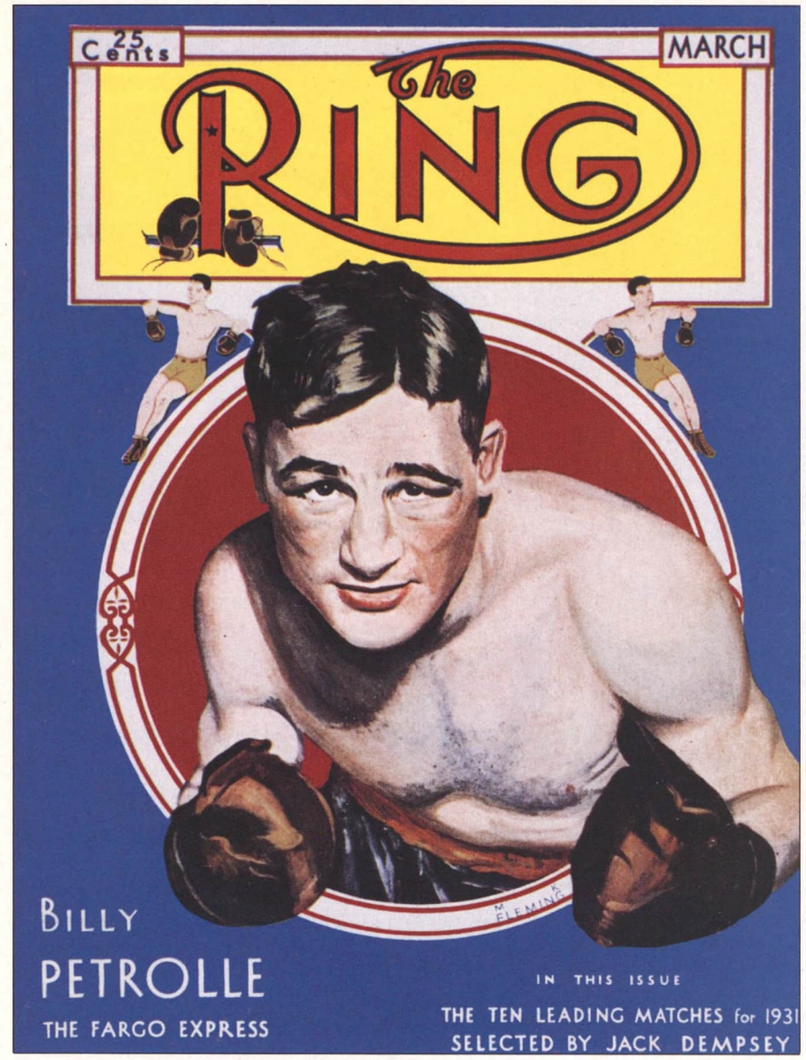
Hurley later explained the strategy to Heinz:

"Petrolle wasn't easy to hit. He gave the impression that he was easy to hit. Sure he did. He invited you to hit him. Do you know why? Because then he could hit you back. Petrolle would go in there and put it up there where you could hit it. He'd take two or three jabs, then slip under and let go with the heavy artillery. That's a good trade anytime you can take three light punches and let go with the heavy stuff. What gave people the impression that Petrolle was easy to hit was that he was always on the edge of danger. That's the place to be. Be in there close where you can work, where you take advantage of it when the other guy makes a mistake. You're safest when you're closest to danger."

By 1925, THE RING noted that Petrolle "looks like the best boy" in Hurley's stable of fighters, and when Petrolle knocked out top-ranked lightweight Eddie "Kid" Wagner the next year in a big upset ("Petrolle, practically unknown, was no doubt taken for a dub by Wagner," said THE RING), "The Fargo Express" roared into the lightweight Top 10.

Hurley took credit for the nickname too, but Petrolle and others said it was coined by Bob Green, sports editor of the *Hartford Courant*, after Petrolle soundly beat a fighter called Steven Smith in the Connecticut capital city in 1924. The night of the fight the Wells Fargo Express Co. reported a train robbery, and in the newspaper the next morning Green's story about the fight began, "The Fargo Express arrived on time last night, despite the robbery, when Billy Petrolle ... "

On January 13, 1928, Petrolle and 135-pound champion Sammy Mandell went 10 no-decision rounds in Minneapolis. Petrolle staggered

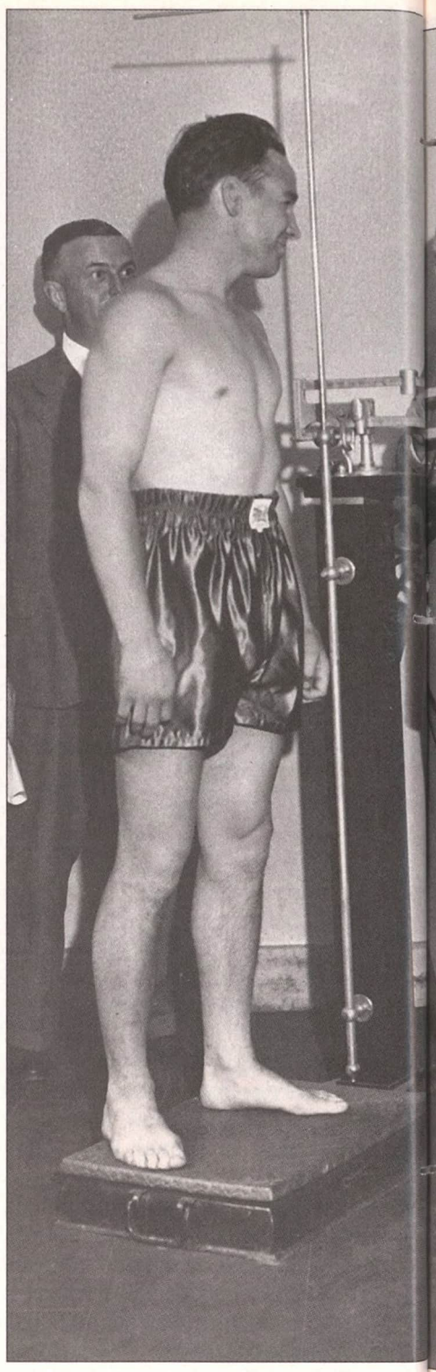


Mandell in the eighth round, and Hurley hollered that the timekeeper rang the bell early to prevent a kayo. In Petrolle's Madison Square Garden debut a few fights later, another one got away when Bruce Flowers recovered from a close encounter with Petrolle's trademark left hook and won the decision. A month after that, Petrolle lost on a cut eye TKO to journeyman Tommy Grogan, prompting the "greed for gold" harrumph from *The Milwaukee Journal*.

"He figured in 18 battles in 1927, an unusual amount for a chap of Billy's build," wrote the *Journal*'s Sam Levy. "Overworked, he showed further signs of slipping (against Flowers)." When his cut healed, Levy predicted, "he'll not be the same effective fighter he was a year ago. He jeopardized his standing in the division by placing the dollar ahead of his condition."

For a while, though, The Fargo Express was back on track. Later in '28, Petrolle became the first one to knock out future junior lightweight champ Jackie "Kid" Berg. He beat Flowers in a rematch, and also stopped Stanislaus Loayza. Promoter Tex Rickard ranked Petrolle fourth in his end-of-the-year ratings for THE RING.

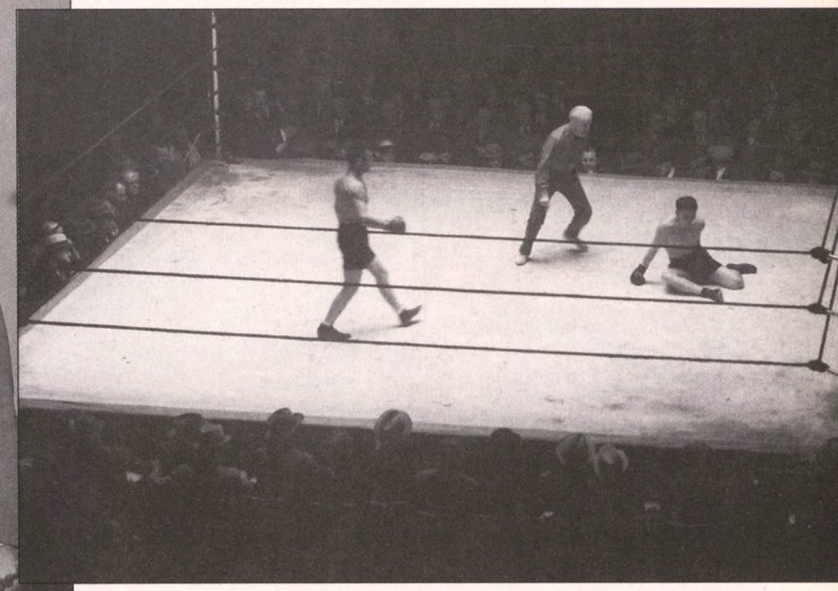
But on September 9, 1929, Petrolle lost a decision to ferocious King Tut, incurring more bad cuts above his eyes. Figuring the sportswriters who said he was washed-up at 25 had it pegged, Petrolle announced his retirement from boxing and even bought a pair of eyeglasses to correct the vision problems some experts blamed for his deterioration in the ring.

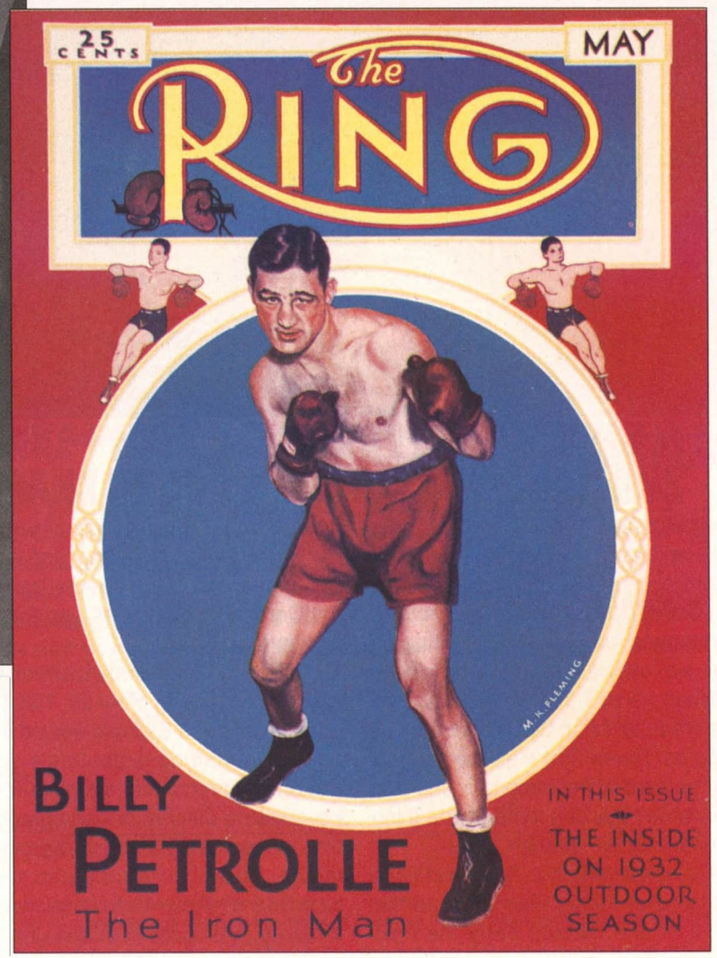


He only wore them once. When Hurley saw the specs, the livid manager ordered Petrolle to get rid of them and said he'd mop the floor with the fighter himself if Petrolle ever wore them again. Then Hurley said nuts to retirement too, and after a four-month rest, The Fargo Express was back. He was really back when Petrolle beat future lightweight champion Tony Canzoneri on September 11, 1930.

Two months later, Petrolle knocked

The hot-and-cold Petrolle also fought a three-bout series with the great Jimmy McLarnin, pictured weighing in for one of their bouts (left). Petrolle did his best work in their first fight, decking McLarnin en route to a 10-round decision victory.





Ring announcer Joe Humphries raises Petrolle's arm as kayo victim Battling Battalino is attended to by his handlers. Petrolle beat Battalino twice in 1932, which earned him a shot a lightweight champion Tony Canzoneri.

down 6-1 favorite Jimmy McLarnin twice and won a unanimous decision over the future welterweight titlist at the Garden, and onlookers who'd pronounced him dead were wiping off their own eyeglasses in astonishment.

When he was 81, McLarnin, an all-time great, told Earl Gustkey of the *Los Angeles Times* that Petrolle had hit him "so hard in the second round that afterwards I couldn't remember a thing from rounds two through seven."

After providing the "greatest fistic upheaval of 1930," Petrolle was the victim of one himself early the next year when King Tut knocked him out in 24 seconds of the first round in Minneapolis. They fought again in the Garden 25 days later, and Petrolle won in four.

McLarnin beat him by decision in a savage rematch on Mary 28, 1931, but a month later the Express wowed them again by handing Argentina's Justo Suarez his first defeat via ninth-round kayo with a display of bodypunching that moved Nat Fleischer to proclaim in THE RING: "If Petrolle can throw punches at Tony Canzoneri (who'd become 135-pound champion) as he hurled them with effectiveness at Suarez, a new lightweight king will be crowned."

McLarnin won their rubber match with a decision win on August 20, but then Petrolle stopped Billy Townsend and Eddie Ran successively at the Garden and was hailed anew for, as the Associated Press stated, "one of the most remarkable comeback campaigns in modern ring history."

On March 25, 1932, the wild cheers of 18,000 fans threatened the stability of the Garden's walls when Petrolle beat Batt Battalino,

who'd surrendered the featherweight title to move up in weight, in what Westbrook Pegler called "the greatest cleaver and blackjack prizefight ever fought" there.

Battalino won the early rounds, but the fighter THE RING called "the old man of pugilism" came roaring back to have his hand raised with half-a-minute left in the 12th and last round with Battalino out on his feet.

The fight was so thrilling that in the June 1932 issue of THE RING was another feature entitled, "They're STILL Talking About It," which predicted that "when the years have passed and both the contestants in that hectic mill have passed from the picture, the story of their contest will be told and retold."

Another story in that issue ranked Petrolle as the third greatest puncher in lightweight history, behind Joe Gans and Benny Leonard. But even better than that was his unprecedented number-one ranking in the lightweight, junior welterweight, and welterweight divisions."

Knocked down in the first round by Battalino in a rematch on May 20, Petrolle got up and won a resounding decision. But he suffered an injury to his left elbow that was aggravated in his 10-round victory over Tommy Grogan the following November. An operation was necessary, and then there were weight issues leading up to Petrolle's fight with Canzoneri for the lightweight title on March 22, 1933.

Petrolle won maybe four rounds, and in the final seconds of the 15th round, the champion let up when Petrolle was in a bad way so he could finish on his feet.

Years later, Heinz wrote: "Petrolle never won the lightweight title because (Hurley) steered him away from it for years. Jack felt that once you win the title, the boxing commissions run your fighter, and he figured Petrolle could make better fights and more money without it."

Hurley was probably blowing more self-aggrandizing smoke. Before Petrolle fought Barney Ross at age 28 on March 22, 1933, the *Chicago American* newspaper quoted him as saying, "I've

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Hurley peers over Petrolle's shoulder as the challenger signs the contract to fight Canzoneri. That's promoter James J. Johnson in the middle, Canzoneri on the far left, and manager Sammy Goodman looking over the champ's shoulder. The Fargo Express lost a 15-round decision in what turned out to be the only title shot of his Hall of Fame career.

got a little money, a little fame, and a little following. I'm getting old, and now I want a title before I die!"

Ross won handily in 10 rounds, and repeated the feat at the Garden on January 24, 1934. Petrolle retired from boxing then, and this time proved he was serious by announcing that he was going to send his famous Indian blanket to the cleaners. In over 200 bouts (his official record is 121-25-14, with 65 KOs), Petrolle never had the filthy thing laundered, figuring that his good luck would be washed out with all the sweat and blood. "When they send me to the cleaners," he said, "they can send the blanket too, but not until then."

Maybe Hurley wasn't interested in the title, but Petrolle worried that without one he would be forgotten. "They don't forget champions, but the memory of fellows like myself who never won a title soon fades, and I hate to think that in a year or so I will be only a name, and maybe not even that," he fretted.

Fleischer hit that one out of the park when he wrote in April 1934: "The mighty roar of the old Fargo Express will ring in the ears of fight fans as long as you live. You wrote your name in the hearts of the fans." Longer than that, actually. In 2000, Petrolle's name was written on the roster of International Boxing Hall of Fame inductees.

Petrolle had saved a couple hundred Gs, and was in good shape financially up to his death on May 14, 1983. To the end, he said he owed it all to Hurley. "I have him to thank for every good thing that's ever happened to me," Petrolle told boxing writer Robert J. Thornton.

Hurley came close with a couple other fighters, but never like with Petrolle. The effort and disappointment turned him even grumpier and cynical, except where the man he called his "idol" was concerned. "People have great respect for fighters," he told Jack Olsen in 1961. "I don't, except for certain fighters, like Billy Petrolle, who were men in and out of the ring." ■

Pete Ehrmann is a Wisconsin-based writer and historian, and a frequent contributor to THE RING.

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★ Carlos Palomino
★ Sir Henry Cooper
★ Erik Morales
★ Vito Antuofermo
★ Angelo Dundee
★ Angel Manfredy
★ Danny "Little Red" Lopez
★ Terry Norris
★ Johnny Tapia
★ Virgil Hill
★ Gene Fullmer
★ Acelino "Popo" Freitas
★ Hector "Macho" Camacho
★ Andy Lee

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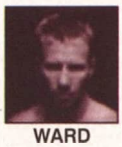

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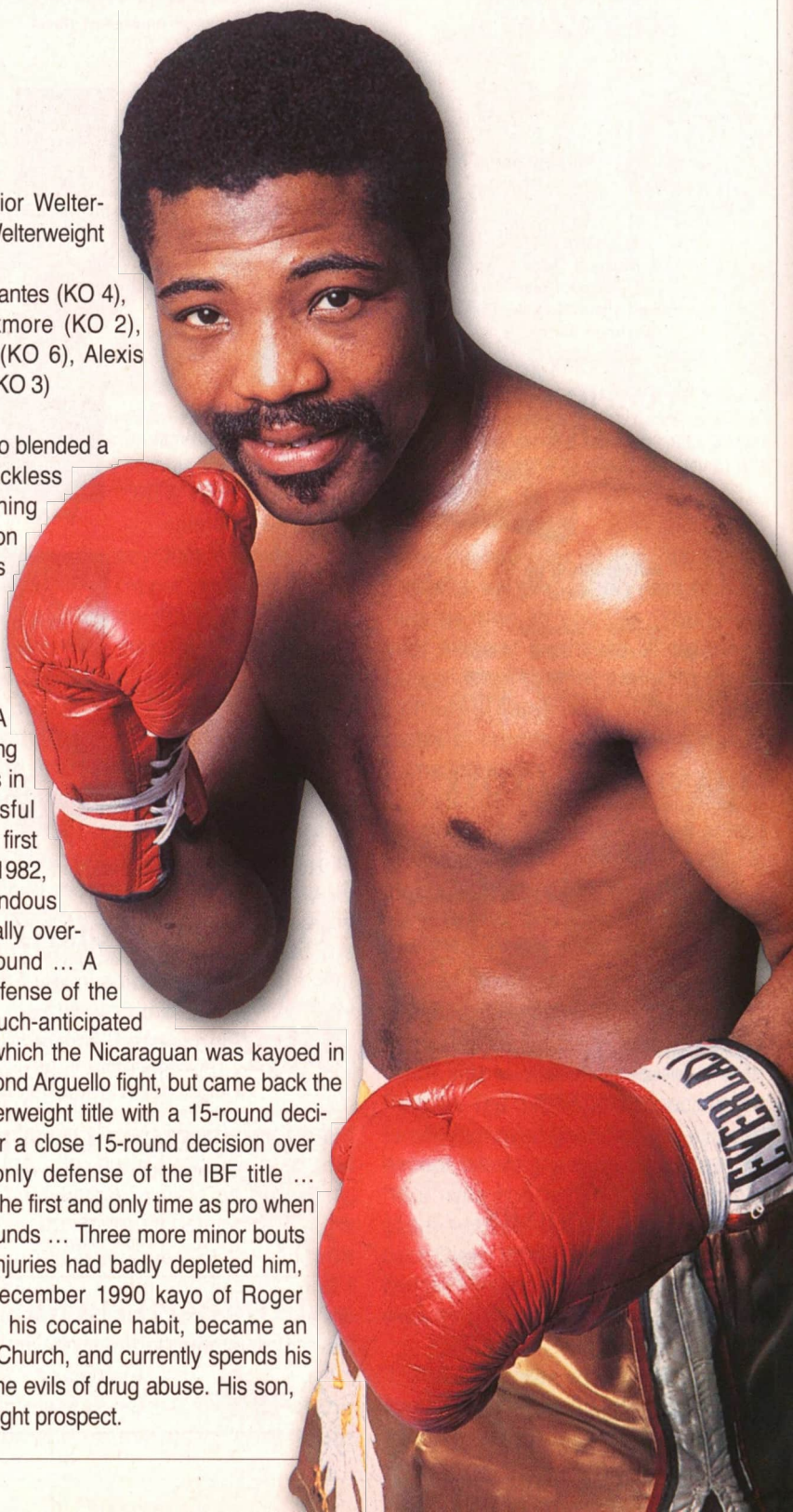
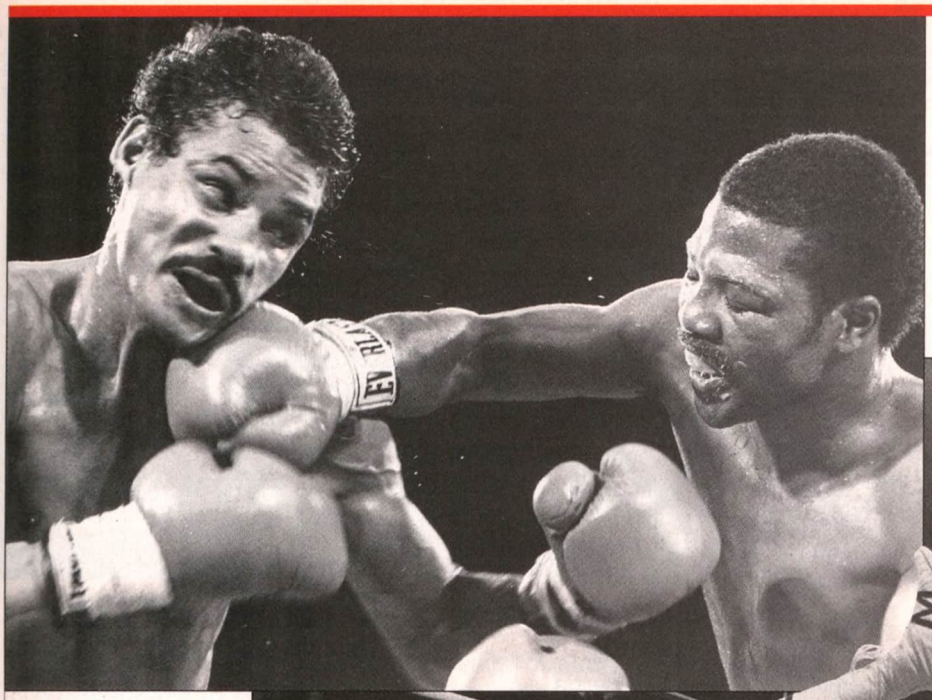
Hall of Fame Profile

THE RING features a thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York

Aaron Pryor

Birthdate: October 20, 1955
Birthplace: Cincinnati, Ohio
Nickname: The Hawk
Weight Class: Junior Welterweight
Height: 5'6½"
Professional Record: 39-1 (35)
Professionals Titles: WBA Junior Welterweight (August 2, 1980-1984), IBF Junior Welterweight (June 22, 1984-1985)
Best Performances: Antonio Cervantes (KO 4), Dujuan Johnson (KO 7), Lennox Blackmore (KO 2), Miguel Montilla (KO 12), Akio Kameda (KO 6), Alexis Arguello (KO 14, KO 10), Sang Hyun Kim (KO 3)
Year Of IBHOF Induction: 1996
Background: A relentless dynamo who blended a high degree of skill, laser-like speed, reckless courage, and blazing combination punching into a virtually unbeatable package ... Won silver medal at 1975 Pan American Games and topped a remarkable 204-16 amateur career by beating Thomas Hearns to capture the 1976 National Golden Gloves ... Turned pro in November '76 with a second-round kayo of Larry Smith ... Won the WBA 140-pound title on August 2, 1980, knocking out future Hall of Famer Antonio Cervantes in the fourth round ... Tallied five successful defenses (all via kayo) prior to his famous first fight with Alexis Arguello on November 12, 1982, at Miami's Orange Bowl. It was a tremendous give-and-take battle, but Arguello was finally overwhelmed and knocked out in the 14th round ... A third-round TKO of Sang Hyun Kim in defense of the WBA belt in April 1983 preceeded the much-anticipated rematch with Arguello that September, in which the Nicaraguan was kayoed in the 10th round ... Retired following the second Arguello fight, but came back the following year, winning the IBF junior welterweight title with a 15-round decision over Nick Furlano. Retired again after a close 15-round decision over Gary Hinton on March 3, 1985, in his only defense of the IBF title ... Returned to action in August '87, losing for the first and only time as pro when Bobby Joe Young stopped him in seven rounds ... Three more minor bouts followed, but cocaine addiction and eye injuries had badly depleted him, and permanent retirement followed a December 1990 kayo of Roger Choate in Norman, Oklahoma ... Kicked his cocaine habit, became an ordained deacon of the New Faith Baptist Church, and currently spends his time training boxers and lecturing kids on the evils of drug abuse. His son, Aaron Pryor Jr., is an undefeated middleweight prospect.





Arguello absorbs a right hand from Pryor during their 1983 rematch in Las Vegas. Pryor pretty much dominated their second fight, knocking out Arguello in the 10th round.

Pryor had to come off the floor to stop previously undefeated Japanese challenger Akio Kameda in the fourth round of a July 1982 bout held at Cincinnati's Riverfront Coliseum.

Hawk Time: Pryor greets his fans at the International Boxing Hall of Fame, where he is a frequent and popular guest during Induction Weekend.

PHOTO BY PAT ORR

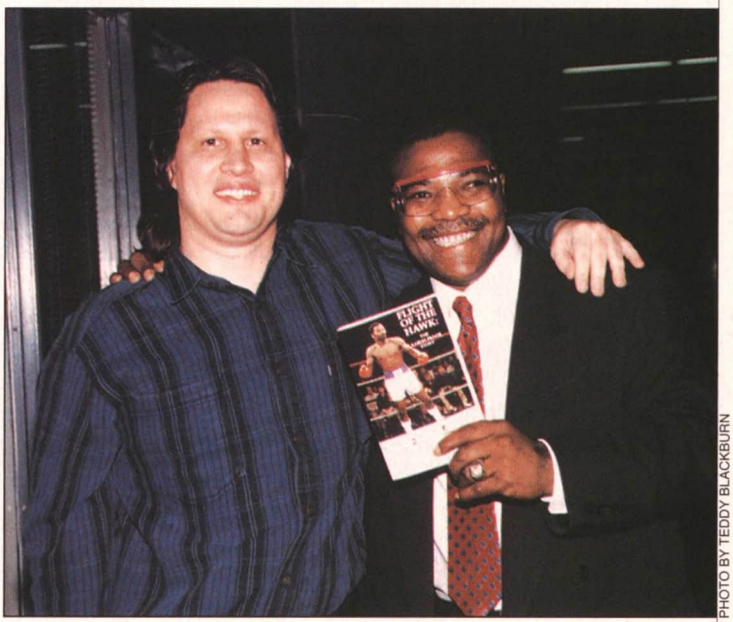


PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Author Marshall Terrill and Pryor pose with a copy of Flight Of The Hawk, *which they wrote together and published in 1996.*

[Summary]

Heavyweights

Samuel Peter KO 6 Oleg Maskaev
(*Wins WBC Title*)
Wladimir Klitschko W 12
Sultan Ibragimov
(*Retains IBF Title*)
John Ruiz W 12 Jameel McCline
Yakup Saglam KO 4 Serdal Uysal
Sinan Sam KO 2 Ratko Draskovic
Vinny Maddalone KO 2 Jeff Yeoman
Alexander Ustinov KO 1 Earl Ladson
Travis Walker KO 2 T.J. Wilson
Joseph Chingangu KO 5 Isaac Ankra

Cruiserweights

David Haye KO 2 Enzo Maccarinelli
(*Retains World Title*)
Johnathon Banks KO 1 Imamu Mayfield
Rudolf Kraj W 12 Matt Godfrey
Daniel Ammann KO 9 Brett Smith
Rob Calloway KO 8 Juan Robles
Ran Nakash KO 7 Asmir Vojnovic
Grigory Drozd W 8 Michael Simms
Elieser Castillo KO 5 Lenzie Morgan
Alexander Alexeev KO 3
Talmadge Griffis
Justin Verdin KO 1 Ricky Folse

Light Heavyweights

Reggie Johnson W 12
Julio Gonzalez
Richard Gutierrez W 10 Jose Varela
Yuri Barashian KO 8 Thomas Ulrich
Dario Cichello KO 5 Vincenzo Imparato
Vyacheslav Uzelkov KO 3
Julio Dominguez
Crazy Kim KO 2 Vitori Natawake

Super Middleweights

Lucian Bute KO 10 William Joppy
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Anthony Mundine W 12 Nader Hamdan
Librado Andrade KO 8 Robert Stieglitz
Markus Beyer W 8 Murat Mahmudov
Michael Walker D 10 Antwun Echols
Jesse Brinkley KO 11 Otis Griffin
Marcos Reyes KO 9 Kirino Garcia
Curtis Stevens KO 8 Thomas Reid
Les Sherrington KO 8 Charles Njock
Dimitri Sartison KO 8 Pablo Nievas
Andre Ward KO 7 Rubin Williams
Peter Manfredo KO 6 Shane Benfield
William Gare KO 4 Maselino Masoe
Tomas Adamek KO 3 Robert Andrasik
Aaron Pryor Jr. W 8 Alphonso Williams
Natascha Ragosina W 10
Teresa Perozzi

Middleweights

John Duddy W 10 Walid Smichet
Joe Greene KO 10 Francisco Mora
Lee Noble W 10 Anthony Young
James Moore W 10 Juan Candelo
Matthew Macklin W 10
Yory Boy Campas
Francis Cheka KO 10 Hassan Matumla
Brian Vera KO 7 Andy Lee
Paul Smith KO 6 Cello Renda
Renan St. Juste KO 5 Mohammad Said
Wayne Cooper D 8 Jose Spearman
Enrique Ornelas KO 7 Norberto Bravo
Darren Barker KO 7 Steven Bendall
Avtandil Khurtsidze KO 3 Jurijs Boreiko
Pawel Wolak KO 2 Dupre Strickland
Charles Whittaker KO 1 Luther Smith

Junior Middleweights

Anthony Osbourne W 10 Saoul Mamby
Jose Gonzalez D 10 Jason LeHoullier
Kyung-Suk Kwak W 10
Hyung-Won Jung
Zaurbek Baysangurov KO 8
Roman Dzuman
Sechew Powell KO 1 Kevin Finley
Sergio Sanders KO 9 Pablo Medina
Hussein Chiwa KO 6 Moses Mahilasi
Attila Kovacs KO 4 Janos Petrovics
Peter Quillin KO 2 Thomas Brown
Ronny Vargas W 4 Monyette Flowers
Wilford Scypion Jr. KO 2 Billy Outley
Ulises Lopez KO 1 Marcelo Rodriguez

Welterweights

Favio Medina W 12 Santos Pakau
Kevin McIntyre W 12 Kevin Anderson
Rodolfo Martinez W 11 Marcelo Miranda
Orlando Escobar W 10 Marcos Garcia
Frank Horta W 10 Anthony Guillet
Hironobu Futami W 10 Joji Osaki
Tony Doherty W 10 Barrie Jones
Valery Brazhnik Tech. Win 9
George Ungiadze
Victor Puiu KO 9 Leonardo Rojas
Jose Torres KO 6 Segundo Herrera
James De La Rosa KO 4 James Webb
Robert Medley KO 4 Dondon Sultan
Daniele Petrucci KO 3 Craig Watson
Jung-Bum Kim KO 2
Manfa Luksaikongdin
Hector Saldivia KO 1 Jorge Miranda
Arturo Morua KO 3 Mario Mondragon

Junior Welterweights

Andreas Kotelnik KO 12 Gavin Rees
(*Wins WBA Title*)
Mike Arnaoutis W 12 Harrison Cuello
Ismael El Massoudi W 10
Abdoulaye Soukouna
Hector Munoz W 10 Roberto Valenzuela
Cesar Cuenca W 10 Juan Godoy
Sergey Fedchenko W 10 Gari Abajian
Diego Alzugaray KO 10 Martin Coggi
Mkwanda Matumla KO 9
Maliki Kinyogoli
Giuseppe Lauri KO 6 Peter McDonagh
Dmitriy Salita KO 5 Fabian Luque
Lucas Matthysse KO 4 Jorge Medrano
Danny Garcia KO 1 Charles Wade
Jesus Pabon W 8 Daniel Garcia

Lightweights

Joel Casamayor KO 10 Michael Katsidis
(*Retains World Title*)
Nate Campbell W 12 Juan Diaz
(*Wins WBA/IBF Titles*)
Javier Jauregui W12 Miguel Huerta
David Diaz W 10 Ramon Montano
Cristian Favela W 10 Sergio Rivera
Freddy Mamani W 10
Alexander Tanchiva
Jorge Teron KO 5 Sandro Marcos
Rustam Nugaev KO 7
Jose Antonio Izquierdo
Luyanda Jako KO 7 Amon Baloyi
Cristian Lopez KO 3 Martin Armenta
Jorge Paez Jr. KO 3 Tomas Barragan
Mlungigi Dlamini KO 1
Jairo Moura Dos Santos
Antonio DeMarco W 8 Juan Martinez

Junior Lightweights

Manny Pacquiao W 12
Juan Manuel Marquez
(*Wins World/WBC Titles*)
Oscar Larios W 12 Arturo Gomez
Vitali Tajbert W 12 Jesus Escalona

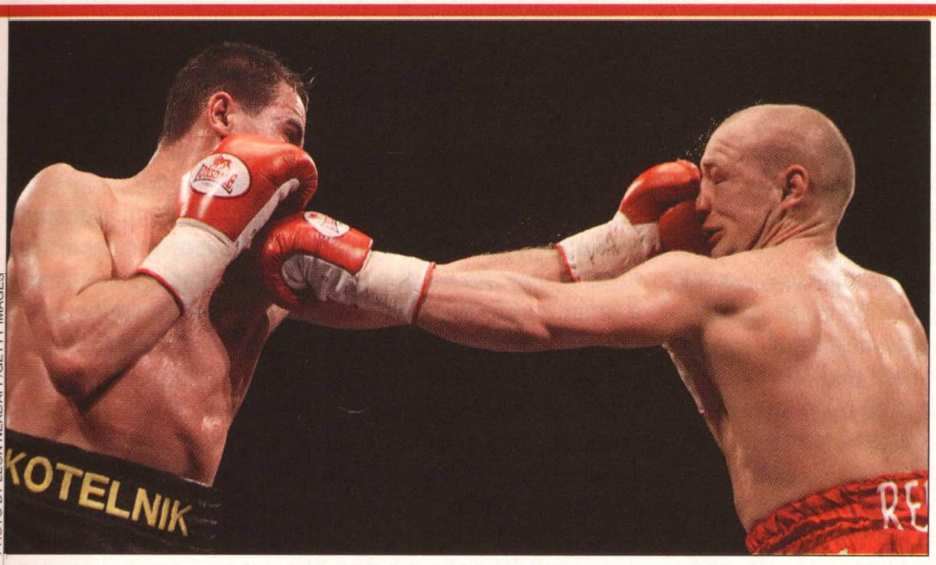


PHOTO BY LEON NEAL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Junior welterweight Andreas Kotelnik smashes Gavin Rees in the face with a left

Antonio De Vitis W 12 Alex Miskirtchian
Rogers Mtagwa W 10 Aldo Valtierra
Billy Dib W 10 Edgar Vargas
Masato Maedo W 10
Kumarnthong Por Pluemkamol
Raymundo Beltran KO 9 Moises Perez
Kevin Mitchell KO 9 Carl Johanneson
Koseki Nakama KO 6 Kengo Ito
Michael Lozada KO 4 Eugenio Lopez
Alisher Rahimov KO 4
Thitichon Singwancha
Roman Martinez KO 3 Jose Anibal Cruz
Yuriorkis Gamboa KO 1 Johnnie Edwards

Featherweights

Robert Guerrero KO 8 Jason Litzau
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Steven Luevano W 12
Terdsak Jandaene
Fahsai Sakkreerin W 12 Simson Butar
Miguel Roman W 10
Fermin De los Santos
David Chianella W 10 Luca Maggio
Cristobal Cruz W 12 Thomas Mashaba
Weng Haya W 10 Pedro Malco
Eric Canoy KO 9 Rajabu Maoja
Jeffrey Mathebula KO 8
Yoshinori Miyata
Jorge Lacierva KO 6 Leon Bobo
Chonlatarn Piriyapinyo KO 5 Amor Tino
Michael Farenas KO 3 Baudel Cardenas

Junior Featherweights

Israel Vazquez W 12 Rafael Marquez
(*Retains World Title*)
Oscar Chauke W 12
Sergio Carlos Santillan
Rendall Munroe W 12 Kiko Martinez
Oliver Lontchi W 12 Roberto Lopez
Sergio Medina W 10 Ramon Torres
Zsolt Bedak W 10 Lubos Priehradnik
Tomoaki Hashizume W 10 Satoshi Niwa
Antonio Meza W 10 Carlos Medellin
Franklin Teran KO 10 Zsolt Nagy
Alex Escaner W 10 Dante Cantiga
Gil Melligen W 10 Tiny Tyson
Juan Manuel Lopez KO 3
Jonathan Oquendo
Ariel Delgado KO 1 Somchai Raja Gym
Mcbute Sinyabi KO 1 Tshepo Mokokeng

Bantamweights

Jhonny Gonzalez KO 2 Giovanni Urbina
Veeraphol Sahaprom KO 3
Kentaro Nakayama
Nobuo Nashiro KO 3 Sairung Suwanasil
Abner Mares KO 1 Diosdado Gabi
Jason Booth W 12 Lante Addy
Heriberto Ruiz W 12 Francisco Garcia
Eduardo Garcia W 12 Nick Otieno
Bongani Mahlangu KO 12
Peter Pambeni
Tshifhiwa Munyai W 12
Julio David Roque Ler
Tabtimdaeng Na Rachawat W 11
Glenn Porras
Ryuichi Okahashi W 10
Takahiro Takeda
Shun Hashiguchi W 10
Yusuke Morishima
Anita Christensen W 10 Jane Kavulani
Pungluang Sor Singyu W 10
Javier Malulan
Kosuke Hayashi KO 7
Daisuke Maruyama
Alex Olea KO 2 Miguel Barrios
Takuro Kodama Tech. Draw 4
Masayoshi Nishi

Junior Bantamweights

Dimitri Kirilov D 12 Cecilio Santos
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Devid Lookmahanak W 12
Makoto Tanigawa
Katsumi Makiyama W 10
Yosuke Sekigawa
Giovanni Caro KO 9 Oscar Ibarra
Francis Miyeyusho KO 5
Anthony Mathias
Francisco Arce D 10 Marco
Hernandez
Erik Ramirez KO 4 Orlando Garcia
Joon-In Yoo KO 4 Yong-Gi Jo
Yota Sato KO 3
Petchklongpai Sor Thantip

Flyweights

Daisuke Naito D 12
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Koki Kameda W 10 Rexon Flores
Carlos Rodriguez D 12 Esau Gaona
Suriya Klongpajol W 10
Katsuhiko Arakaki
Raul Martinez W 10 Benjamin Garcia
Ponomroonglek Kratingaenggym W 10
Irfan Ogah
Yuji Kanemitsu W 10 Eriberto Gejon
Glenn Donaire W 8 Jose Albuquerque

Junior Flyweights

Farid Cassiani W 10 Nelson Cantero
Nelson Dieppa K0 9 Alex Sanchez
Adrian Hernandez KO 4 Gilberto Baas
Sonny Boy Jaro KO 4 Makoto Kido
Melchor Cob Castro KO 3
Ramon Flores
Juan Esquer KO 3 Humberto Pool

Strawweights

Yutaka Niida KO 6 Jose Varela
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Roman Gonzalez W 10 Maravilla Murillo
Raul Garcia W 12 Ronald Barrera
Milan Melindo W 10 Sofhyan Ependi
Yader Escobar W 10 Miguel Tellez
Kwanthai Chor Nor Pattalung W 11
Mating Kilakil
Toshikazu Waga KO 9 Yoddoi Sithsoei
Walter Tello KO 7 Edwin Diaz

Nate Campbell W 12 Juan Diaz

Cancun, Mexico: In what could be the biggest upset of the year, Nate "The Galaxxy Warrior" Campbell overcame an early points deficit and a man 12 years younger to win a split decision over Juan "Baby Bull" Diaz in the Plaza de Toros bullring on the Samuel Peter-Oleg Maskaev undercard.

WBA, IBF, and WBO titleholder Diaz had, in the minds of many, earned the unofficial distinction of being the best lightweight in the world. Now, things are vastly different.

"He was the best," said Campbell, "but now I am the best! I told everyone that this was going to happen. I knew he couldn't take it and I knew I was the stronger fighter."

Over the first half of the fight, Diaz, 134, Houston, Texas, fought in his typically aggressive style, swarming forward and firing away with both hands. But a cut over his left eye and the subsequent swelling around it caused him considerable difficulty over the second half of the fight, and Campbell, 134½, Tampa, Florida, dominated down the stretch.

Judge Ric Bays (USA) scored it 114-113 for Diaz. He was overruled by Bill Clancy (USA), who had Campbell up 116-111, and Joe Garcia (USA), who had Campbell winning 115-111. THE RING thought Campbell swept the last six rounds to win the fight, 114-113.

Campbell, 36, tried to score with a sneaky right in the first as the 24-year-old Diaz elected to stand in the trenches and bang to the body. The titleholder scored with uppercuts and a right hook, but Campbell shook his head to indicate he was unhurt. A clash of heads caused a small cut to open on the left eye of Diaz in the first, and Campbell complained of being hit behind the head in the second.

Diaz was unrelenting, and earned cheers from the crowd as he connected with lefts and rights to the head while Campbell lay on the ropes. But it was a one-sided affair. Campbell connected with two good shots to the body and a right to the head in the third, and the rapid-fire pace continued in the fourth and fifth, when Campbell landed better quality punches. He connected with a left hook and later with two rights as Diaz pushed him to the ropes.

Diaz complained of a headbutt in the sixth as the cut over his left eye suddenly took a dramatic turn for the worse. Referee Jesus Salcedo (Mexico) incorrectly ruled the damage to be the result of a headbutt and promptly deducted a point from Campbell. Replays, however, showed that the damage was the result of a punch. When action resumed, both men stood in the middle of the ring and traded ferociously—Diaz banging to the body and Campbell scoring with uppercuts.

Campbell landed cleaner punches in the seventh and landed a good right in the eighth, but Diaz came back later

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Campbell digs in and beats previously undefeated Diaz at his own game

in the round with a solid 1-2 of his own. Campbell took back the momentum, however, pounding Diaz to the body and head, as the titleholder's cut eye began to swell badly.

Both men exchanged straight rights in the ninth, but Campbell outfought Diaz in the 10th, landing often with overhand rights that Diaz couldn't see coming. Diaz, 33-1 (17), tried coming forward in the 11th, but was largely ineffective and was forced to hold on several occasions in order to survive his adversary's bombardment.

Both men fought in close quarters at the start of the final round, with Campbell, 32-5-1 (25), landing solid rights. But Diaz, who looked ready to go a few rounds earlier, hung tough and was still trying when the final bell rang.

"When I got cut it affected me a lot," said Diaz. "But I wasn't going to give up. I have a lot of heart and I was going to finish this fight out no matter what."

Television: **HBO**

Promoter: **Don King Productions, Duva Boxing, One Punch Promotions, Pepe Gomez Promotion**

(3-8-08)

Matt Richardson

John Ruiz W 12 Jameel McCline

Cancun, Mexico: In front of a crowd that appreciated clean, action-packed prizefighting, a Ruiz-McCline match would inevitably disappoint. So it was no surprise that the approximately fans 7,000 in attendance booed more than they cheered as Ruiz scored the latest win in his latest comeback—a lopsided decision over the listless McCline on the un-televised portion of the Samuel Peter-Oleg Maskaev card at the Plaza de Toros bullring. The fight was a so-called WBC qualifier for an eventual shot at the title and open scoring was used.

It was a tedious affair in which both men clinched almost as much as they boxed. Ruiz, 43-7-1 (29), was the busier fighter throughout and simply outworked the taller McCline, 39-9-3 (23), who couldn't avoid getting hit by Ruiz' right. He repeatedly absorbed the same punch over the course of the 12-round fight.

Ruiz, 233, Chelsea, Massachusetts, came out quickly in the first, but the clinching began almost immediately. As is his wont, Ruiz would punch and clinch, and then try to throw rights on the inside. He succeeded in landing two

[The Ring Fighters of the Month]

Israel Vazquez & Rafael Marquez

It is rare indeed that The Ring honors both the winner and the loser of a fight as co-winners of its Fighter of the Month award. The last time it happened was in 2001, when Micky Ward and Emanuel Burton (now Augustus) shared the honor following their incredible 10-round war, an unrelenting slugfest that was eventually selected as The Ring's Fight of the Year.

It would not come as a surprise if the breathtaking rubber match between world junior featherweight champion Israel Vazquez and ex-champ Rafael Marquez ended up being 2008's Fighter of the Year. Sure it took place on March 1, when there were still almost 10 months left in the year, but nobody who saw what took place between these two warriors would doubt the strong possibility that history will repeat itself.

Both men totally committed themselves from first bell to last, tearing into each other with unbelievable ferocity and no small amount of skill. It was mesmerizing stuff, climaxed by Vazquez' amazing 12th-round surge that gave him just enough points to retain the 122-pound championship.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

PHOTO BY DAVID MARTIN-WARR/DON KING PRODUCTIONS

Ruiz tags McCline with a right hand between clinches

good ones in the third, but any punching was immediately followed by clinches.

Ruiz scored well with right uppercuts in the fifth, bloodying McCline's nose, and a jab-right combination by Ruiz backed McCline, 268, West Palm Beach, Florida, into the ropes in the final seconds. The lumbering pace continued in the middle rounds, and after eight, all three judges had Ruiz winning by the score of 78-74.

McCline began punching more in the ninth round, as Ruiz appeared to slow down. But Ruiz stepped up his work rate again and had a solid 11th. He also landed three hard rights in the 12th, but McCline came back with a right of his own to stall the Ruiz' momentum shortly before the final bell.

The referee was Lawrence Cole (USA).

Judge Julie Lederman (USA) scored it 119-109, while Manuel Cervantes (Mexico) had it 118-110, and Guillermo Ayon (Mexico) made it unanimous with a 117-111 tally for Ruiz.

Promoter: **Don King Productions, Duva Boxing, One Punch Promotions, Pepe Gomez Promotion**

(3-8-08)

Matt Richardson

Daisuke Naito D 12
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam

Tokyo, Japan: Free-swinging but inaccurate Naito barely retained the WBC flyweight belt as he battled to a split 12-round draw with former titleholder Pongsaklek in a dreary bout.

It was not a so-called "hometown draw," which usually means that a foreigner deserved a victory. The previously formidable Thai was a disappointment. He visibly ran out of gas and seldom tossed punches positively from the fifth round onward. Naito was the aggressor and threw three times as many punches, the vast majority of which missing the mark.

The fight was a disappointment and probably the worst of their four encounters, which now stands at 2-1-1 in Pongsaklek's favor, although the Thai is clearly past his peak, having gone 0-1-1 in their last two bouts. Naito showed no technical improvement, but his abundant stamina allowed him to escape with the title nonetheless.

Even though the 30-year-old Pongsaklek soon proved to be a shell of the fighter he was in his prime, he made a rather good start. The Thai southpaw was in command in three out of the first four rounds, as he counterpunched

PHOTO BY TORU YAMANAKA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Naito catches Pongsaklek flush with a right hand during their 12-round draw

with precision, while Naito, 33, recklessly threw roundhouse blows without hitting the target.

After the WBC's open scoring system showed that the tallies after the fourth were 39-37 (Pongsaklek) and 38-38 (twice), the challenger inexplicably became very negative. He was content to box defensively and threw fewer and fewer counters as the rounds went by.

Naito, 112, Tokyo, dominated three of the next four rounds with continual aggression. No matter how many punches he missed, Naito kept firing and kept his rival on the defensive

Aware he was slightly behind on points after scores of 78-74 (Naito) and 76-76 (twice) were announced between the eighth and ninth rounds, Pongsaklek, 112, turned aggressive for the first time and attacked the rough-and-tumble titlist with busy combos. But it was the first and last time he went on the attack. In the 10th, he returned to his negative waiting game, and Naito, 32-2-3 (20), won the round.

Pongsaklek, 67-3-1 (35), managed to edge the 11th, only to have the still-fresh Naito regain command in the 12th.

The official tallies were as follows: Alejandro Rochin (Mexico) 115-113 for Naito, Jaebong Kim (Korea) 115-114 for Pongsaklek, and Hubert Minn (USA) 114-114. THE RING agreed with Minn.

The referee was Hector Afu (Panama).

"I know it was a close fight, but as I took the last round, I believed that I defended my belt," said Naito, who is now free of the option agreement with Thailand's Diamond Promotion, which had dominated the WBC flyweight title for some 10 years.

The biggest fight for Naito, and the one the Japanese fans want to see, is a showdown with countryman Koki Kameda.

Promoter: **Miyata Promotions**
(3-8-08)
Joe Koizumi

John Duddy W 10 Walid Smichet

New York, New York: Looking at the fighters at the conclusion of the bout, it was hard to tell who was the winner and who was the loser. Duddy, Derry, Northern Ireland, 158½, had cuts above both eyes and his face radiated a purplish hue. He was battered, swollen, depressed—but a winner. Well, a winner on two of the three scorecards, anyway.

Even so, Duddy, 24-0 (17), probably fumbled away his best career opportunity to date, when he struggled mightily against Smichet, Montreal, Quebec, 160, before winning a majority decision. The popular Irishman was counting on the Smichet fight to be a showcase leading to a June title fight against world middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik. But according to Pavlik's promoter, Bob Arum, that opportunity will have to wait.

"I don't think Duddy is going to be ready because of the cuts," said a dour-looking Arum, after losing a potential sellout at Madison Square Garden that would probably have resulted from the combination of Duddy and Pavlik's fan bases. "We're going to have to go to the drawing

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY

Duddy absorbs a left from Smichet in punishing encounter

board and check out all the other middleweights. Maybe we'll have to fight Duddy down the road because Kelly is looking to fight three more times this year. So there'll be plenty of opportunity to fight Duddy if he doesn't fight him immediately."

Duddy, 28, himself admitted his performance against Smichet, 17-4-3 (13), was far below the standards he expected. But he also maintained that he could heal in time to face Pavlik by June. However, the contention that quickly circulated throughout Madison Square Garden, as Duddy's face came apart against a journeyman, was that he would get seriously hurt against Pavlik. And who'd want to see that?

Smichet, 28, could not miss Duddy's stationary head if he tried. The Tunisia-born Canadian established early on that Duddy was not going to walk all over him. He crashed four shots off Duddy's head that quickly opened a cut over his left eye by the end of the first round. Chances are, Duddy would not have been able to withstand those thunderous shots if it had been Pavlik throwing them.

Smichet continued with more of the same in the second and third rounds, swinging wildly at times, but still hitting Duddy with alarming ease. By the fourth, Duddy was bleeding from cuts over both eyes and looked in danger of losing for the first time as a pro. But to the Irishman's credit, he chipped away, using his jab, establishing a rhythm, and boxed his way back into contention.

Duddy won the last five rounds on THE RING's scorecard for a close 96-94 victory. Judge Frank Lombardi (USA) had it 95-95, while judges John McKaie (USA) and Don Trella (USA) each had it 98-92 for Duddy, apparently seeing a much different fight than everyone else at the Garden.

Pete Santiago (USA) was the referee.

Promoters: **K2 Promotions, Seminole Warriors Boxing**

(2-23-08)

Joseph Santoliquito

Fernando Montiel KO 4
Martin Castillo

Las Vegas, Nevada: What seemed a competitive match going in turned out to be shockingly one-sided when Montiel sank Castillo for the full count with a left hook to the body in the fourth round of a scheduled 12-rounder. The bout was part of the televised portion of the Kelly Pavlik-Jermain Taylor II undercard at the MGM Grand Garden Arena and proved an outstanding showcase for "Cochulito's" formidable fighting skills.

Castillo, 115, Los Angeles, had held the WBA super flyweight title from December 2004 until July 2006, when Japan's Nobuo Nashiro took the title away via decision. But even though he had looked a bit jaded in a trio of comeback wins, few expected Castillo to fold so quickly.

Montiel, 115, Los Mochis, Mexico, almost ended matters in the first round when he dropped Castillo with a left hook to the head. The 31-year-old beat referee Joe Cortez' count and survived until the round-ending bell, but never really got into the fight.

It became clear in the second that Montiel, 28, was punching much harder than his opponent, and even though the pace slowed in he fourth, he stung Castillo with another left just before the end of the round.

The powerful hook Montiel, 36-2-1 (27), landed to end the fight was a beauty, and when Castillo collapsed to the canvas, you could tell it was over, and Cortez (USA) counted him out at the 1:56 mark.

Despite a still very respectable 33-3 (17) record, "El Gallo" doesn't appear to be the same fighter who beat the likes of Eric Morel, Alexander Munoz, and Felix Machado just a few years ago. Montiel, on the other hand, not only retained his WBO title with perhaps his career-best win, he also earned the top spot in THE RING's 115-pound ratings, which means he will have to be involved in any bout for the vacant world title.

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**

Promoter: **Top Rank**

(2-16-08)

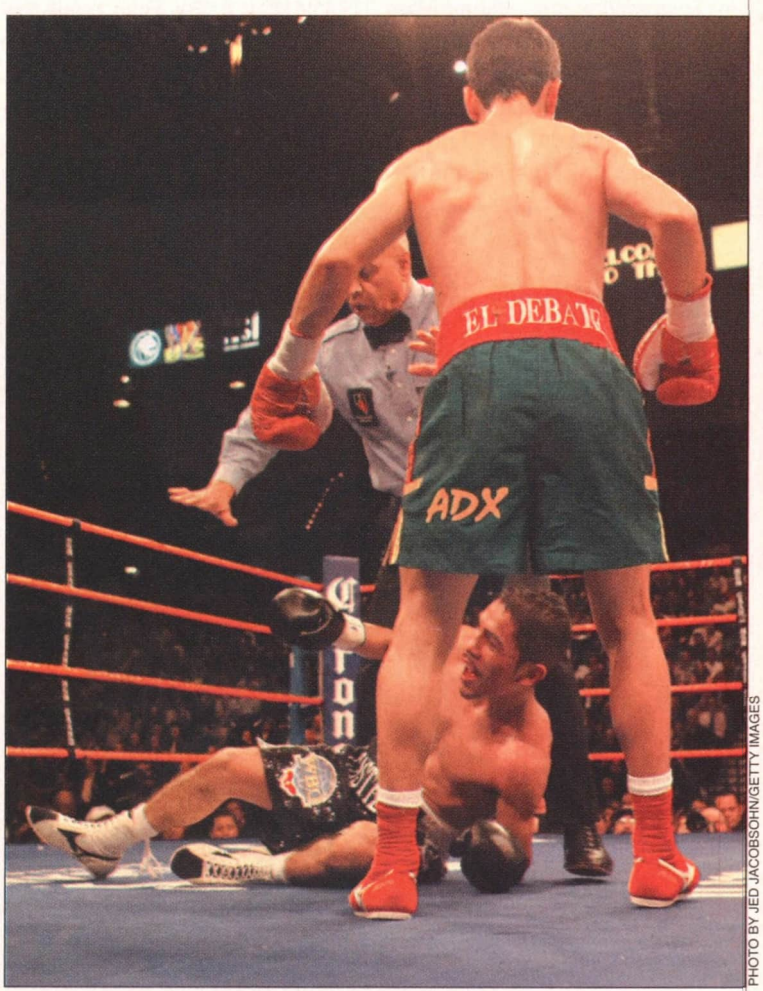


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Montiel towers over Castillo after scoring knockdown

Cristian Mijares W 12 Jose Navarro

Las Vegas, Nevada: Early arriving fans on hand at the MGM Grand Garden Arena for Pavlik-Taylor II were treated to superb display of the Sweet Science, when WBC super flyweight titleholder Mijares outpointed Navarro over 12 fast-paced rounds of high-class boxing. Overall, the harder, crisper punches of Mijares were the difference, but Navarro fought well enough in defeat to stay in contention.

The fact that both men are highly skilled southpaws did not mean this was a dancing contest. They both stood their ground and went to work, landing frequently with a variety of punches. Mijares, 115, Gomez Palacio, Mexico, built a lead over the first half of the bout, generally staying a punch or two ahead of his persistent adversary. But the plucky Navarro, 115, Los Angeles, outworked Mijares, 26, in the sixth and also took the eighth and ninth on THE RING scorecard by keeping his hands churning.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Mijares ducks a left from Navarro and counters with a right

Mijares, 26, surged back in the 10th with a series of hard shots, but Navarro absorbed them well and flurried late in the round to keep it close. Then, in the 11th, Navarro, who had been leaking blood from his nose since the second round, suffered a nasty cut over his right eye, which prompted referee Russell Mora to twice interrupt the action and ask the ringside doctor to inspect the gash.

Navarro, his face covered in blood, never gave up and outworked Mijares again in the final round, but it was not enough to salvage a win.

Judge Chris Wilson's score of 115-113 in favor of Mijares was an accurate reflection of what took place inside the ring, but Adalaid Byrd's 117-111, also for Mijares, seemed overly generous. Doug Tucker's 120-108 for Navarro, which means Mijares didn't win a single round on his card, was so off-base it defied all logic and cast serious doubt on his ability to judge future bouts. THE RING scored it for Mijares, 116-113.

Mijares upped his record to 33-3-2 (13), while Navarro slipped to 26-4 (12), all four of his losses coming in alphabet title bouts.

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Top Rank, DiBella Entertainment**
(2-16-08)

Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 8 Jose Celaya

Leon, Mexico: After experiencing trouble at the scales, Chavez had to overcome another problem when his scheduled 10-round bout with Celaya at the Domo de la Feria began: He kept getting hit in the head.

Southpaw Celaya, who is actually more of a switch-hitter, came out in an orthodox stance and outworked Chavez in the opening round. But in the second, Chavez suddenly floored his foe with a left hook. Celaya got up at the count of four, his left eye bruised, his legs still shaky. Chavez, however, was slow to follow up, and Celaya not only survived the crisis, he edged the third and then really opened up in the fourth, drilling Chavez repeatedly with flush shots.

Celaya, 153, Salinas, California, stayed in control in the fifth and sixth, scoring frequently with right hands and rocking Chavez with a left hook. Only Celaya's lack of a big punch, coupled with Chavez' sturdy chin, prevented a major upset.

Celaya's left eye was almost closed by the seventh, but he continued to press forward aggressively. Still, he was rapidly tiring from the effort, and Chavez, 154, Culiacan, Mexico, dropped him with a short, chopping right in the eighth.

Celaya, 31-4 (16), beat referee Rocky Burke's count and waded back into the fray, but following a brief exchange, he turned away from Chavez and walked to his corner, forcing Burke (USA) to stop the fight at the 2:14 mark.

Chavez, 35-0-1 (28), is clearly going to have to move up to the middleweight division in the not-too-distant future. He turned pro as a skinny, frail-looking 130-pounder in September 2003, but his six-foot frame has filled out and there is some question as to whether or not he actually did make the junior middleweight division limit for Celaya. Sam Garcia, Celaya's trainer, alleged that Chavez jumped on and off the scale so quickly it was impossible to tell.

Television: **Azteca**
Promoters: **Top Rank, Promociones Zanfer**
(2-9-08)

Edgar Sosa W 12 Jesus Iribe

Leon, Mexico: Sosa, boxing's busiest titleholder, tallied his fourth successful defense of the WBC junior flyweight title with a unanimous 12-round decision over fellow-Mexican Iribe on the Chavez Jr.-Celaya card at the Domo de la Feria.

Sosa, who won the vacant alphabet strap with a 12-round decision over Brian Viloria on April 14, 2007, was superior to Iribe in every way and dominated from first bell to last. He utilized his fast hands, accurate jab, and rapid-fire combinations to totally outclass his challenger, who had lost two of his four most recent bouts going into the title fight.

Virtually every round was the same, except the second, when Iribe, 107½, landed a hard bodypunch, and the 12th, when he launched an all-out attempt save the day. Iribe, 13-5-3 (7), landed several hard punches in the final round, but his last-ditch attack only served to wake up Sosa, who rallied back to hurt his rival with a left hook and then unleash a prolonged attack aimed at ending things inside of the distance. Nonetheless, the game but limited Iribe was still on his feet at the sound of the final bell.

Referee Laurentino Ramriez and all three judges were from Mexico. Judges Gelassio Perez Huerta and Humberto Olivares handed in twin tallies of 120-108 for Sosa, while Miguel Angel Moran saw it 119-109.

The 28-year-old Sosa, 107½, upped his record to 31-4 (16), and was tentatively scheduled to defend again, on March 29, against Carlos Melo in Haiti.

Television: **Azteca**
Promoters: **Top Rank, Promociones Zanfer**
(2-9-08)

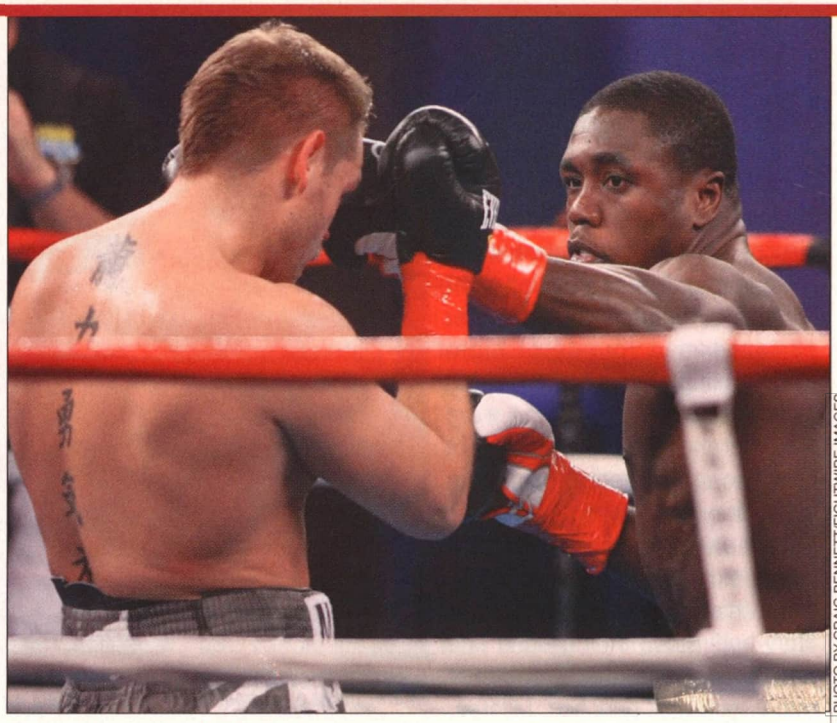


PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Berto on the attack against Trabant

Andre Berto KO 6 Michel Trabant

Temecula, California: Someone must have done their homework before digging up Trabant, because under his glossy record, most of which was accrued in Germany, there was little substance. Trabant, fighting in the United States for the first time, was *supposed* to be a challenge to rising prospect Berto, 146, Winter Haven, Florida. But the 29-year-old Trabant, 146, Berlin, did hardly anything, and seemed more interested lasting the scheduled 10 rounds than putting up any kind of a fight. The bout was on the undercard of the Carlos Quintana-Paul Williams show, which was televised by HBO from the Pechanga Resort & Casino.

Had anyone looked deeper into what they were getting from the German import, they would have seen that Trabant's last significant victory came two years ago, against undefeated Marco Cattikas. Trabant originally won the fight by eighth-round TKO, but the result was changed to no-contest after Trabant tested positive for steroids.

Trabant did not seem to want any part of the stalking, hard-punching Berto. Although Trabant was supposed to be a technically sound fighter with a good jab, he must have left those skills at the airport baggage claim. He did, however, prove that he could take a shot—because he took plenty in the first couple of rounds. Berto smothered Trabant with punches, and the rare times Trabant fired back, he missed. And so it went round after round.

Berto attacked from different angles, backing up Trabant frequently and snapping back his foe's head with right uppercuts. By the fifth round, the fight was almost painful to watch. Berto pounded away incessantly, as Trabant struggled to even land a punch. At the end of the sixth round, Trabant, 43-3-1 (19), had had enough and motioned to referee Raul Caiz Jr. (USA) that he was through.

In the grand scheme, Berto, 21-0 (18), did not really gain much from the victory, other than adding another win to his record and proving he's more than ready for a step up in opposition.

Television: **HBO**
Promoters: **Goossen Tutor Promotions**
(2-9-08)

Dimitri Kirolov D 12 Cecilio Santos

New York, New York: If this were basketball, then Dimitri Kirilov's strategy would have been obvious. Behind on points and with time running out, Kirolov applied a full court press against challenger Santos that resulted in Kirolov retaining the IBF junior bantamweight title by majority draw. Kirilov's late surge saw him get a 116-112 nod from judge Bob Gilson, who was overruled by Steve

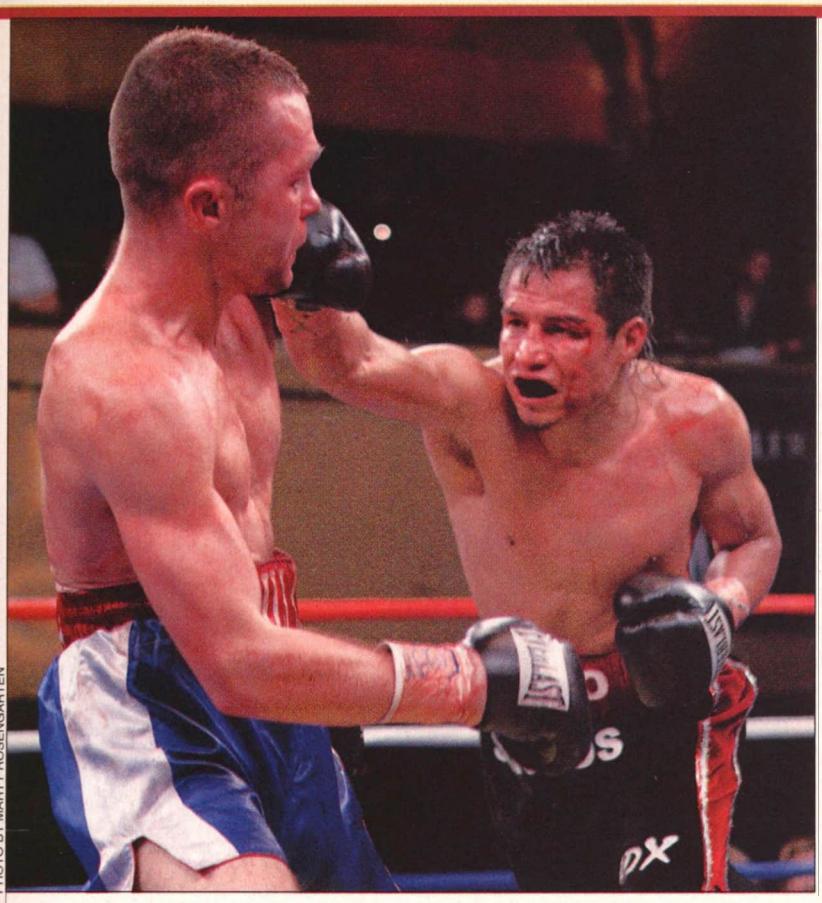


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Kirilov drives a right into Santos' chin

Epstein and Kevin Morgan, who both scored the fight even at 114-114, as did THE RING. Steve Willis refereed.

A draw is supposed to favor the champion, but in this case the gusty challenger from Mexico City may have gained more by the stalemate. Coming off of a stoppage loss to WBO 115-pound titleholder Fernando Montiel in July 2007, Santos 22-8-3 (12) was thought to be nothing more than a showcase opponent for the rising Kirilov, but he turned out to be far more competitive that expected.

Kirilov, 113½, 29-3-1 (10) landed frequently in the opening round and buckled Santos' knees. But over the next few rounds it was Santos, 115, who forged ahead, taking the fight to Kirilov and landing left hooks to the liver in the tradition of Julio Cesar Chavez. Santos also had no problem reaching Kirilov's chin with looping rights, and despite being shorter, out-jabbed him as well.

Kirilov, a Russian based in Los Angeles and trained by Freddie Roach at the Wild Card Gym, had no head movement. It was the offensive charge he mounted in the sixth round that got him back into the fight. Kirilov showed considerable urgency, forcing Santos to the ropes and attacking.

There was little to choose between the fighters in the seventh and eighth. Then, in the ninth, the 29-year-old Kirilov scored heavily and forced the challenger to retreat. Santos also suffered a cut near his left eye and a swollen cheek.

Over the last three rounds, Kirilov moved steadily forward, unloading punches. Santos fired back, but it was as much to keep Kirilov off him as it was to take the initiative. Santos was hurt by right hands in the 11th and forced to retreat.

Rights and left hooks from Kirilov landed early in the 12th, but the best action of the fight came in the final seconds when both men engaged in a furious exchange that earned them a rousing ovation from the crowd at the Roseland Ballroom.

Promoters: **Gotham Boxing, Bash Boxing**

(2-28-08)

Jack Hirsch

Anthony Mundine W 12 Nader Hamdan

Sydney, Australia: Mundine wanted a tough contest at the beginning of the year to prepare for some bigger fights. He certainly got it from veteran Hamdan, who forced Mundine to win on points over 12 rounds. No matter how many punches Mundine landed, Hamdan, who was in his first title fight, kept firing back.

The 32-year-old Mundine, 165½, Sydney, was defending the WBA super middleweight title for the third time, a particularly bogus belt, considering that THE RING

PHOTO BY CAMERON SPENCER/GETTY IMAGES

Mundine connects en route to hard-fought decision over Hamdan

undisputed world champion Joe Calzaghe has possession of the WBA's 168-pound "undisputed" title.

After a close first round, when 34-year-old Hamdan, 167½, Sydney, dug to the body, Mundine controlled the fight with his harder and faster punches. Hamdan's work rate was consistent, but he didn't have the sting in his punches to visually hurt "The Man."

Hamdan made his stand in the seventh round. The taller Mundine backed him into a corner, but the challenger spun out and fought back, surprising Mundine. Hamdan took a right hand and retreated to the ropes briefly in round eight, before punching and landing gallantly without fear. There was some blood dripping from Hamdan's left cheek below his eye, but it appeared to spur him forward. He waved Mundine in, and the crowd at the Sydney Entertainment Centre responded to his efforts by chanting "Nader, Nader."

Hamdan hit the canvas in round nine, but referee Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico) ruled it a slip.

Mundine, 31-3 (23), was on the move at the beginning of round 10, jabbing without conviction and apparently taking the round off. A left hook from Hamdan, 40-6 (18), landed fiercely.

Hamdan's toughness and fitness were exceptional. Although he'd been beaten and his face was smeared with blood, the crowd continued chanting his name in appreciation of his performance.

There was little if any of the usual showmanship from Mundine, who knew he was in a real battle. "He is what he is," said Mundine. "Nader 'Lionheart' Hamdan. He wasn't going to come in with the mindset that he was going to be stopped. It is very hard to knock out someone like that."

Judge Silvestre Abainza (Philippines) was close to the mark with a 117-111 tally for Mundine, but judge Pinij Prayadsab (Thailand) 119-109 and judge Chalerm Prayadsab (Thailand) 120-108 had too wide a margin for Mundine, apparently missing the quality work Hamdan had done on the inside. THE RING scored the fight 116-112 for Mundine.

Promoter: **Tony Mundine**
(02-27-08)
Paul Upham

PHOTO BY TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Varela grimaces in pain as referee Caiz counts him out

Yutaka Niida KO 6
Jose Luis Varela

Tokyo, Japan: WBA minimumweight titleholder Niida impressively retained the belt, decking Venezuelan challenger Varela with a vicious body bombardment for the full count at the 2:16 mark of the sixth round at Korakuen Hall. It was the 29-year-old Niida's seventh successful defense and the best performance in his career.

The 5'2" titleholder is notorious for his caprice and fluctuating performances, but against Varela, 104½, he was aggressive from the start, stalking the Venezuelan and landing double left hooks to the belly and the face with precision. Niida, 23-1-3 (9), accelerated his offense in the second as he made good use of his powerful left hand to hurt the challenger, who kept circling to avert his tormentor's attack.

Midway into the third, Niida, 105, caught the 5'1" challenger with a well-timed left hook, dropping him on the seat of his trunks. After Varela beat the count, Niida unleashed a flurry of punches in an effort to finish the job, and it was only Varela's determination and durability that enabled him to withstand the titleholder's onslaught.

Niida was already in command in round four when he landed a smashing left hook-right hook combination that staggered Varela, who kept retreating and circling. He occasionally tried to retaliate with quick combos, which were mostly averted by the titlist's quick movement.

In the fifth, Niida cleverly maintained the pressure without throwing many punches, and used his superb reflexes to avoid Varela's desperate retaliations. Then, in the fateful sixth, Niida dug a wicked left uppercut to the side of the midsection. Varela winced and promptly grabbed his adversary to keep him from throwing more bodyshots. Niida realized Varela was hurt and swarmed over him with solid combinations to the body. Varela finally sank to the floor in agony, where referee Raul Caiz Sr. counted him out.

"I'm happy to be able to respond to people's expectations," said the jubilant winner. "I know my real power has increased through six defenses, and I wished to show it to the crowd. If the mandatory defense with unbeaten Roman Gonzalez is decided, I welcome it and am confident to beat him."

"It really hurt me. I couldn't endure it when Niida battered my body," said he crestfallen Varela, whose record fell to 15-4 (2) with 1 no-contest.

Promoter: **Teiken Promotions, Yokohama Hikari Promotions**

(3-1-08)

Joe Koizumi

Lucian Bute KO 10 William Joppy

Montreal, Quebec: The selection of former WBA middleweight titleholder Joppy was a rather dubious one for Bute's first defense of the IBF 168-pound title. After all, Joppy's last five opponents had a combined record of 117-94-7. Nonetheless, the 13,858 fans who turned up at Montreal's Bell Centre on a cold and snowy night saw hometown hero Bute do what needed to be done, which was to take care of business against a lesser opponent.

Joppy, 37, 167½, Washington, D.C., though shopworn, was still game—he was simply outgunned by his younger, fresher rival. The American jabbed to the body and threw the occasional right, but walked into a few counter lefts by the southpaw titleholder.

Bute, 28, 167½, Montreal via Galati, Romania, was content to counter during the first couple of rounds, trying to lure Joppy, 39-5-1 (30), into a trap. Once Bute realized there was no reason to respect his opponent's power, the Canadian stepped up the pace.

Bute, 22-0 (18), let his hands go more often in the middle rounds, snapping Joppy's head back with jabs. Several one-twos to body and head appeared to sap Joppy's stamina.

Joppy's defense was not bad, but he could not sustain any offense. "I could see the openings, especially to the body, but just couldn't pull the trigger," he said.

Indeed, the few times Joppy scored with rights to the head, but there was absolutely no followup. By the seventh and eighth rounds, Bute's bodyshots were taking their toll and a cut under Joppy's right eye had him looking discouraged.

The beginning of the end came in the ninth round, when a combination dropped Joppy to the canvas on his side, much to the delight of the crowd. Later in the round, a flurry by Bute prompted Joppy to take a knee in order to avoid the onslaught. The bell interrupted Bute's attack, but it was only a temporary reprieve.

Bute resumed his assault in the 10th, hammering Joppy with right hooks, straight lefts, and combinations. As he pummeled Joppy in a neutral corner, referee Marlon Wright (Canada) stepped in at the 1:08 mark, just as Joppy was about to go down for a third time.

Before leaving the ring Bute, having turned 28 the day before, was serenaded with "Happy Birthday" by the large crowd.

Joppy announced his retirement after the bout, saying, "I'm not motivated to do this anymore. Bute is a very good fighter. He's in shape and he's strong. He has a great future ahead of him."

That future includes an optional defense in May, then a mandatory defense against the winner of Librado Andrade-Alfred Stieglitz, who were scheduled to face each other in March.

Television: **TVA, Videotron**

Promoter: **Interbox**

(02-29-08)

Mike Greenhill ■

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Bute had an easy time with washed-up Joppy

 (Continued from Page 26)

was a vision that his children wouldn't have to grow up like he did. It's why Martirosyan first stepped into a ring when he was seven.

If Norik learned anything from living in the Soviet Union, sports could be a way to something better.

The former Soviet Union was a dank, cold, cruel place, where drinking was a way to escape the drudgery of everyday life stuck in a communist nation. Norik served in the Soviet army, fighting in the Azerbaijan conflict in the late-1980s and early-'90s.

Once Armenia broke loose from the Soviet Union, Norik vowed to get his family out, gathering up his four children and his wife and landing in Glendale, which has a heavy Armenian population.

"It's one other factor that separates Vanes from many other young prospects, and that he does have a strong fan base. Glendale is chock full of Armenians, and that can only help," Farhood said.

Once in the United States, Norik could be seen trooping his children from one sporting event to another. Whether it was football, soccer, or boxing, there was Norik and his kids in their 1991 champagne-colored Dodge Caravan.

Vanes developed an instant love for boxing. He was fortunate enough to fall under the early tutelage of David Torosyan, a flyweight bronze medalist of Armenian decent who represented the U.S.S.R. in the 1976 Montreal Olympics and who owned a gym in Glendale.

Father and son were an inseparable pair, even when Martirosyan began his amateur career. Norik would take him running through parks so Vanes could run up the side of small mountains ... "where I remember running over rattlesnakes, and my father would tell me that they were long lizards," Vanes recalled, laughing.

The most poignant moments in their relationship came on the long trips when Norik and Vanes, unable to afford accommodations, would travel through the night to arrive at the hotel where the rest of the competitors were getting a good night's sleep. Norik would pass the time by regaling is son with Red Army stories.

"We didn't have money to afford hotel rooms, so we'd sit around in the lobby all night, and sometimes I'd even fall asleep for a few hours on my father's lap," Vanes recalled. "It wasn't easy. I'd be up all night sometimes, if I had a fight in the morning. It's definitely not an easy thing when you're dragging and someone is trying to hit you."

But Vanes won. In fact, compiled a 120-10 amateur record and won the Olympic berth. As always, Vanes' found motivation from his father.

"My father's biggest goal, I think bigger than me being a world champion, was winning an Olympic gold medal—and winning it for the United States, because my father is so grateful for what this country has done for him and our family," Vanes said. "My father didn't even want me to turn pro after the '04 Olympics, because he wanted me to come back and try Beijing this year."

Vanes opted to turn pro anyway. His family needed the money and he was able to embark sooner on a life-long dream of becoming a world champion.

Shields sees that potential. Working with Martirosyan over his last three fights, Shields has him using both of his hands more and sitting down more on his punches to give him greater power.

"Vanes is still in the learning process," Shields said. "He's not a complete fighter yet, but he's getting there, he's getting real close. We just need him to settle down. Because he's was moving so often, he wasn't able to sit down before on his punches. He sees how he can hurt people with both hands. By the end of this year, or by this time next year, I'd like to see him get a minor title shot. He'll be ready."

Regardless of the timetable, Norik, who is slightly self-conscious about his missing hand in social settings, will be by his son's side. It used to make Vanes cringe, but as he's gotten older, he's become more accepting that stares could come.

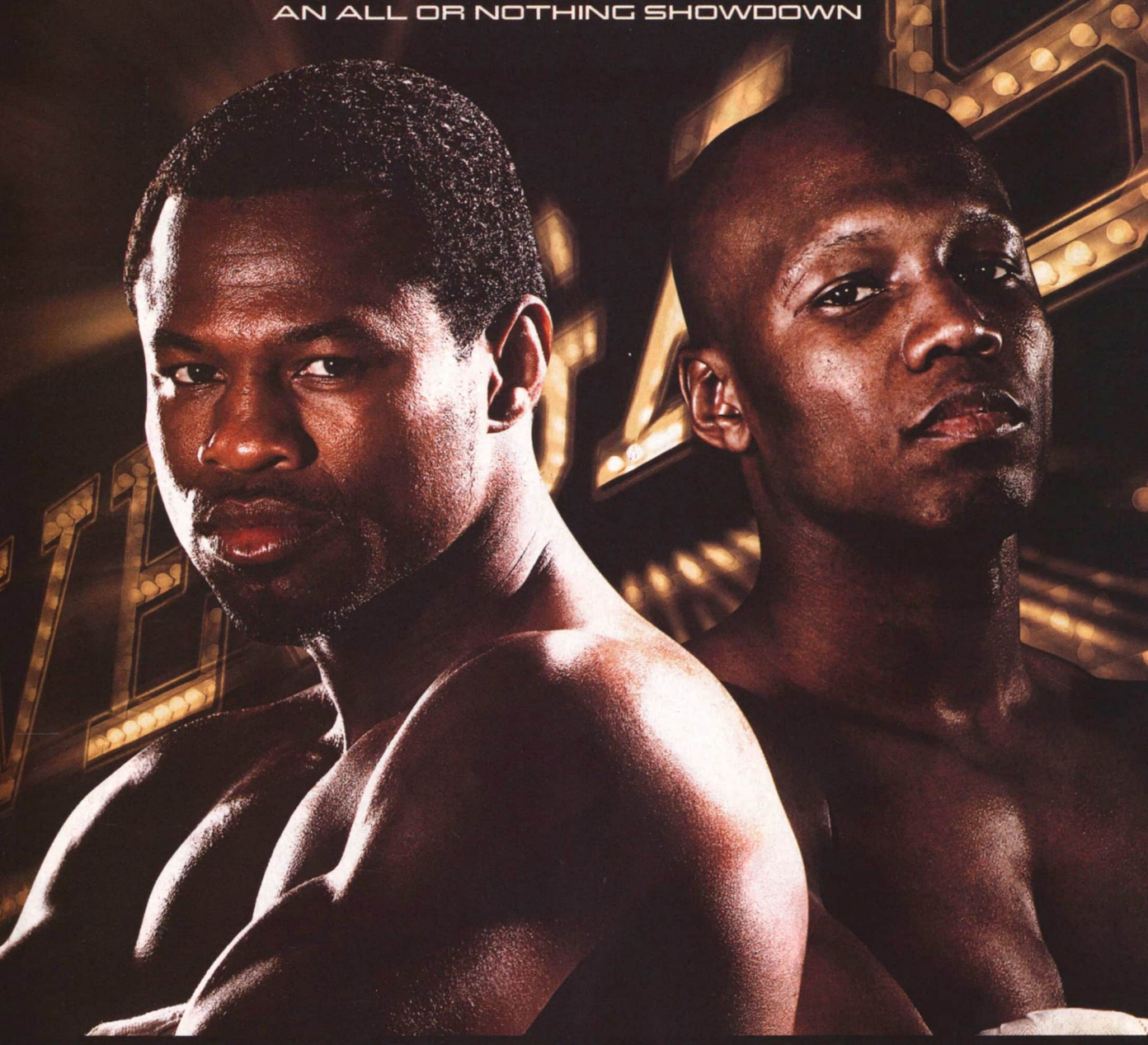
The undefeated Martirosyan lands a right on Patrick Thompson, en route to a six-round unanimous victory in an October 2007 bout in Las Vegas.

"Sometimes we can be watching my little cousin's soccer games and their friends might say something like, 'Look, at his hand,' and point toward my father," Vanes said. "You realize they're kids, and he'll try to hide it at social events. I'm used to it."

So what will happen if or when Vanes has his right hand raised in victory and a title belt wrapped around his waist?

"That's easy," Vanes said, "The first thing I'll do is hand the title belt to my father. That's how special he is to me." ■

AN ALL OR NOTHING SHOWDOWN



MOSLEY VS JUDAH

HIGH STAKES

PLUS BARRIOS VS JUAREZ

SATURDAY, MAY 31, 9 PM ET/6 PM PT

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Welterweights

Zab Judah

Main Event 12 Rounds

Shane Mosley

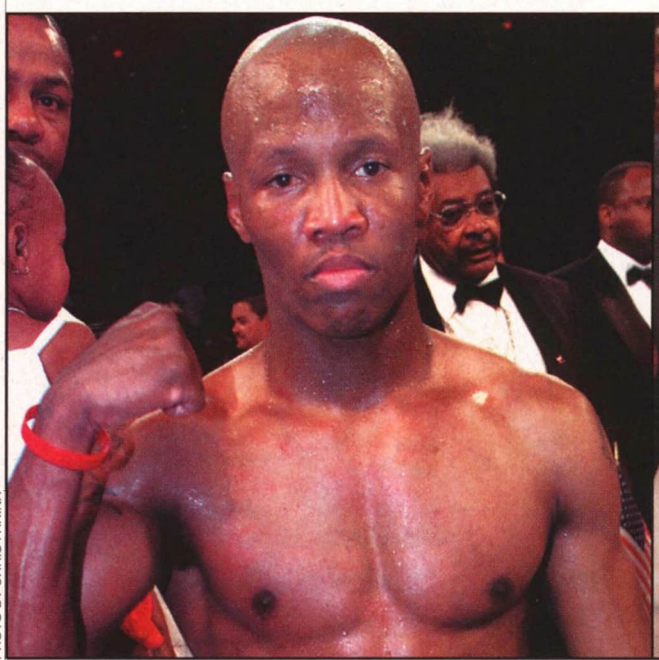


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

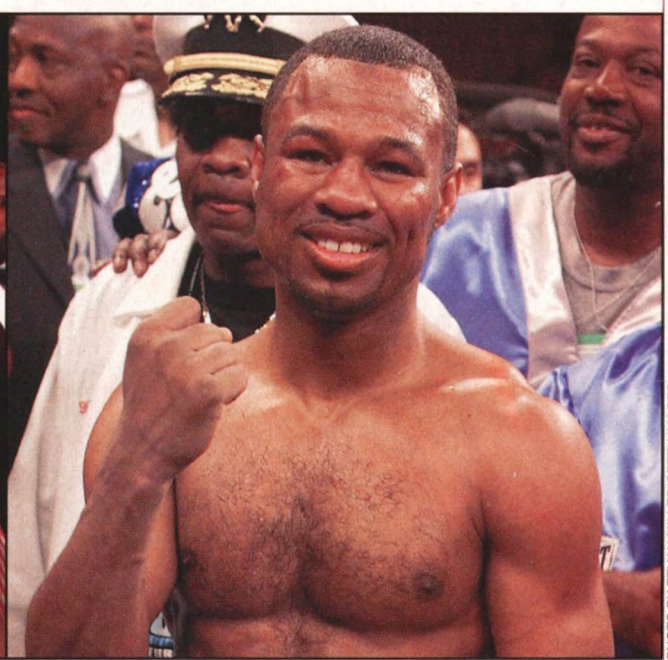


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

There could very well be a sizable dollop of desperation in the mix when welterweight contenders Shane Mosley and Zab Judah square off on May 31 in Las Vegas, on HBO Pay-Per-View. And not without good reason: The loser could very well be finished as an important player in a division that is currently one of the hottest in boxing.

Mosley and Judah are two marquee fighters in search of a marquee victory. "Sugar Shane's" last signature win could arguably have come five years ago in his rematch against Oscar De La Hoya. Mosley did win twice over a faded Fernando Vargas in '06, but suffered a close, though unanimous, decision loss to WBA titlist Miguel Cotto last November.

As for Judah, it's been three years since he's beaten anyone credible. "Super Judah's" ninth-round stoppage of Cory Spinks to capture the world welterweight title in February '05 placed him among boxing's elite, but since then his fall has been precipitous, going 3-3, with 1 no-contest. But a glaring pattern has emerged: Every time Judah has stepped up the opposition in his last seven outings, he's lost—to Carlos Baldomir, to Floyd Mayweather, and to Cotto.

There are no belts on the line in the Judah and Mosley match, just the career course of two well-known ex-champs fighting to stay in the title picture and keep the big-money bouts coming their way. A loss to Judah may force Mosley to think hard about retirement. And although Judah regained some lost luster in his courageous effort against Cotto, a loss to Mosley could relegate him to gatekeeper status.

Both Mosley and Judah have been to the top and crave to get there again, and with so much at stake, a hard-fought—perhaps even desperate—struggle is expected.

Zab Judah

Shane Mosley

Record and World Rating

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Judah bounces a left off of Edwin Vazquez' head

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Mosley drives a left into Collazo's chin

Is 36-5 with 25 knockouts ... Won three New York Golden Gloves titles and one National Golden Gloves championship ... Turned pro in September '96 and annexed vacant IBF 140-pound title in February '00 ... Made three successful title defenses ... Lost bid for world junior welterweight championship in November '01 ... Lost in attempt to win welterweight championship in April '04 ... Won world welterweight championship in February '05, but made just one title defense before losing 147-pound crown in January '06 ... Rated sixth at welterweight by THE RING.

Is 44-5 with 37 knockouts and 1 no-contest ... Had 240-10 amateur career ... Was alternate on 1992 U.S. Olympic team ... Turned pro in February '93 ... Seized IBF lightweight title in August '97 and made eight successful defenses (all via kayo) before moving up in weight ... Won WBC welterweight title in June '00 ... Lost WBC belt in January '02 following three successful defenses ... Won world junior middle title in September '03 ... Lost world junior middleweight title in March '04 ... Is rated second at welterweight by THE RING.

Age and Physical Equipment

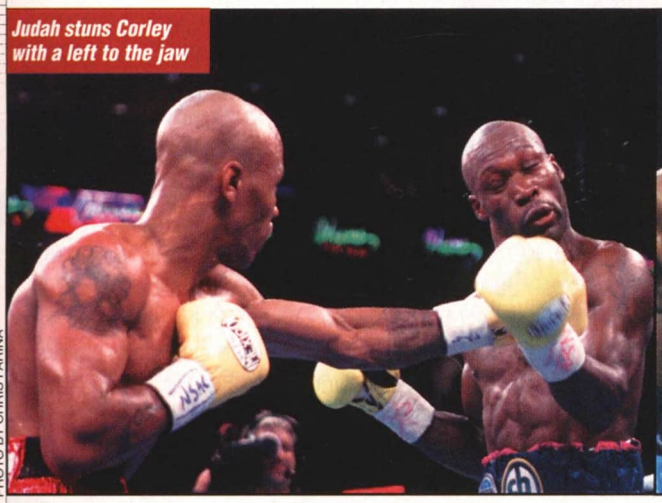


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Judah stuns Corley with a left to the jaw

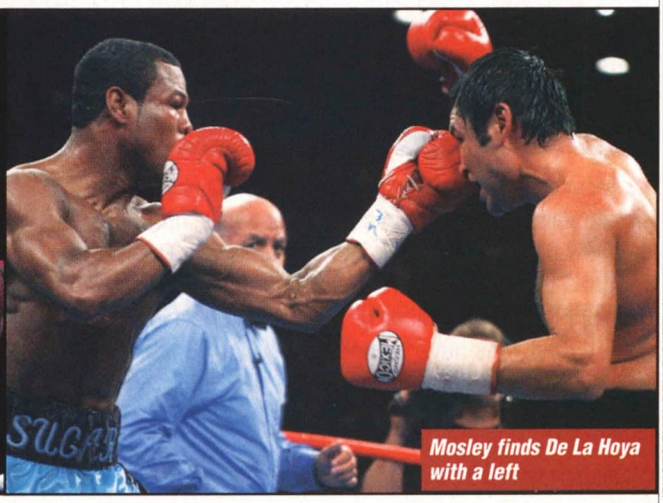


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Mosley finds De La Hoya with a left

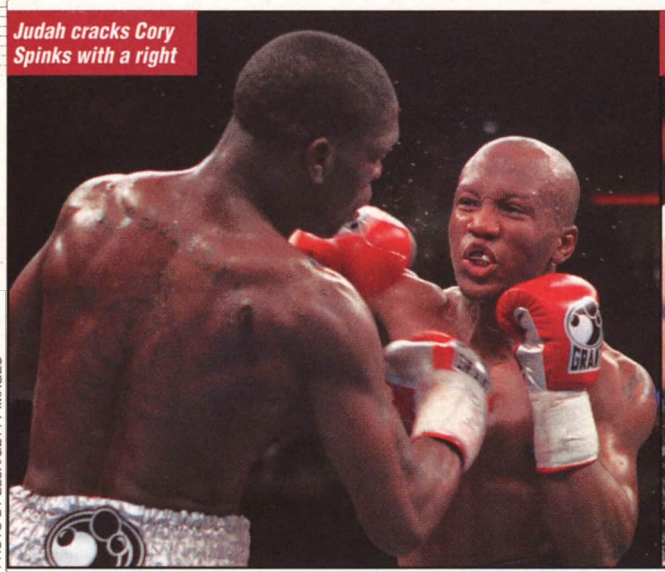
Is 30 years old ... Stands 5'7" with a 72-inch reach ... Strong legs, weak chin ... Has had recently problems with cuts and swelling ... Hand speed still significantly above average ... Questionable durability ... Credible punching power.

Is 36 years old ... Stands 5'9" with a 72-inch reach ... Has hand speed advantage over practically all opponents ... Relatively injury free ... Cuts generally not a major problem ... Has fluctuated between 147 and 154 over last three years ... Excellent chin (never stopped).

Zab Judah

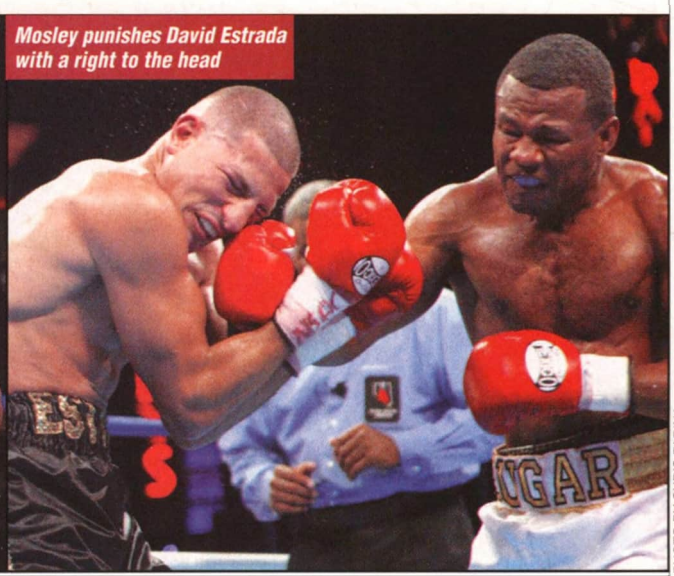
Shane Mosley

Best Weapons



Judah cracks Cory Spinks with a right

PHOTO BY ELSA/GETTY IMAGES



Mosley punishes David Estrada with a right to the head

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Hands still among the quickest in boxing ... Southpaw stance gives foes extra headache ... Punches well from variety of angles ... Unpredictability: He doesn't know what he's going to do, so neither do opponents ... Fast feet ... Left cross and left uppercut most powerful punches.

Explosive combination puncher ... Tremendous body-puncher ... Power in both hands, but straight right could be slightly harder than left hook, especially when thrown to the head ... Accurate jab ... Kayo percentage has decreased since moving up from lightweight.

Previous Fight

Judah came in at career-high 150 pounds on November 17, 2007, against journeyman Ryan Davis, who entered the fight with a 1-3 record in last four fights ... Judah had Davis in trouble early in the second round, but couldn't finish the job ... A hook rocked Judah late in the fight, but he recovered quickly and coasted to a unanimous decision victory by scores of 119-109 (twice) and 118-110.

Mosley's five-fight winning streak was snapped by a unanimous decision loss to Cotto ... The fighters reversed roles, as Cotto boxed more, while Mosley turned stalker ... Cotto was effective with both hands, forcing Mosley to hold in the sixth after absorbing a vicious right ... Mosley closed the gap somewhat in later rounds, but couldn't quite offset Cotto's return flurries ... Cotto remained undefeated, winning the decision by scores of 115-113 (twice) and 116-113.

Quality of Opposition

Most recent victims were journeymen Davis (W 12) and Edwin Vazquez (W 10), in a pair of get-well fights designed to allow him to ease back into contention ... Prior to that, fought a trio of the finest 147-pounders in Carlos Baldomir (L 12), Floyd Mayweather (L 12), and Miguel Cotto (KO by 11) ... Best wins have come against Cory Spinks (KO 9), Junior Witter (W 12), Micky Ward (W 12), Terron Millett (KO 4), and Reggie Green (KO 10).

Has faced the best of the best in three divisions, including Oscar De La Hoya (W 12, W 12) and Fernando Vargas (KO 10, KO 6), Luis Collazo (W 12), John-John Molina (KO 8), Jesse James Leija (KO 9), Golden Johnson (KO 7), Philip Holiday (12), Antonio Diaz (KO 6), and Wilfredo Rivera (KO 10) ... Besides recent loss to Cotto, has suffered a pair of defeats to Winky Wright (L 12, L 12) at junior middleweight and Vernon Forrest (L 12, L 12) at welter.

Defense

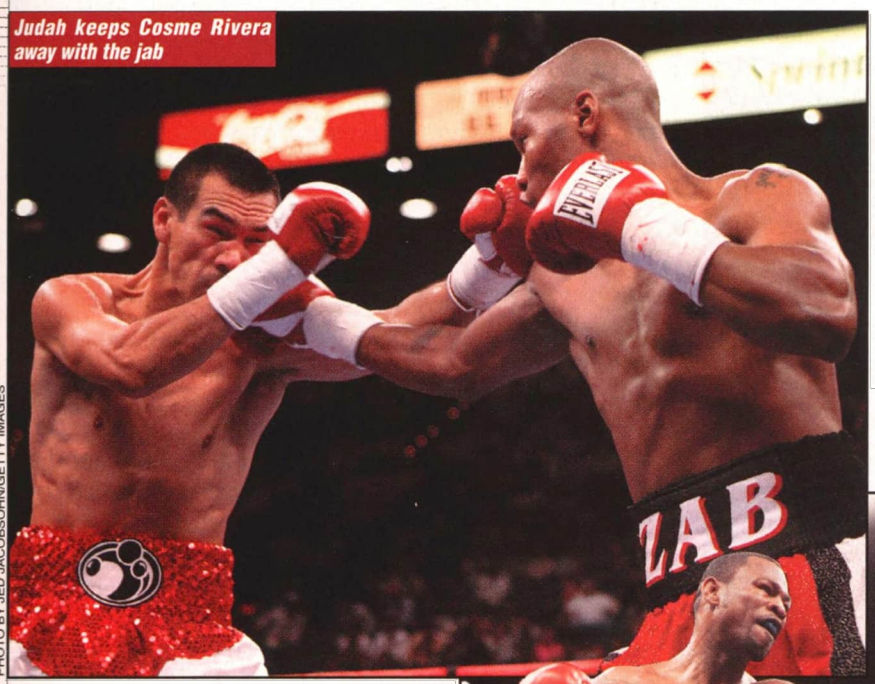
Believed in early stages of career to be defensive wizard, along lines of Pernell Whitaker, but has become much easier to hit in recent years ... Superior mobility has slowed somewhat, but is still above average ... Inability of get out of way of consecutive punches has caused problems of late.

Gets hits more often now than at any time in career ... Still has bouncy legs to rapidly move out of opponent's punch range ... Decent upper-body movement ... Constant offense dissuades many opponents from engaging recklessly ... Able to create angles that allow him to punch without taking shots on the inside.

Zab Judah

Shane Mosley

Style



Judah keeps Cosme Rivera away with the jab

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Quick, stylish southpaw prone to improvise rather than follow a disciplined fight plan ... Once cocky to a fault, but arrogance has evolved to caution the last few years, especially against top-notch opposition ... Attacks in quick bursts ... Mixes punches well to head and body ... Competent finishers.

Aggressive attitude ... Punches in rapid-fire combinations ... Unrelenting finisher when he has opponents in trouble ... Style worked perfectly until Forrest concocted plan of jabbing and clinching ... Able to adjust mid-fight ... Can unload with equal effectiveness up close or at long range ... Comes on stronger down the stretch.

Vargas gets a taste of Mosley's firepower

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

The Questions

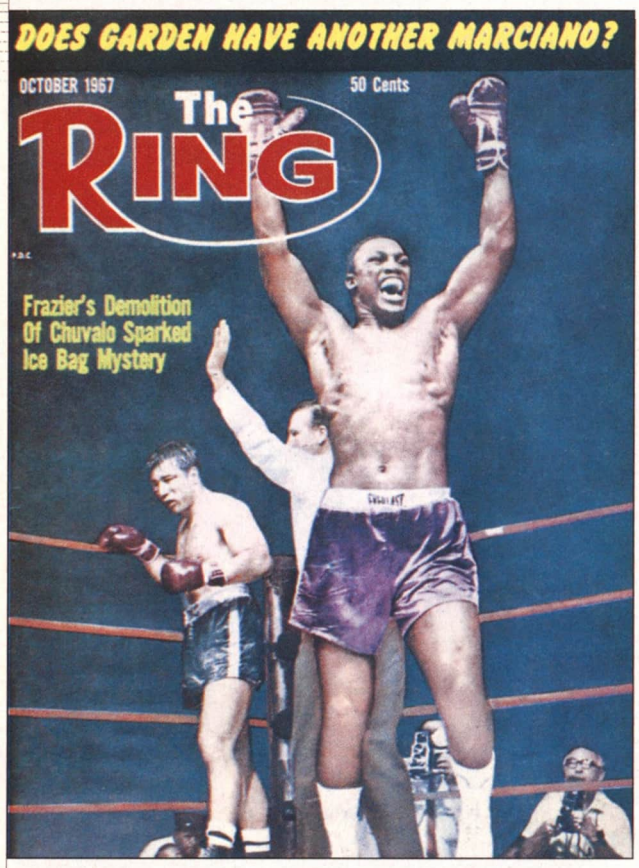
Can his chin hold up? How will he deal with Mosley's speed and steely resolve? Will he resort to fouling out of frustration if he falls behind on points? Can he maintain the same resilience he did in the Cotto fight? Is this the match that will resurrect his flagging career?

How will he offset Judah's speed and front-running tactics? Can he take advantage of Judah's penchant for coming apart under pressure? Can he catch Judah if he employs a hit-and-run style? Will he retire if he loses?

The Outcome

Judah's speed and two-handed offensive keep him in the fight throughout the first half of the bout. But as the rounds tick by, Mosley's constant pressure and unflappable demeanor allow him to slowly pull ahead and win a close but comprehensive decision in a pleasing, fast-paced fight.

October 1967



COVER STORY: "Frazier's Demolition Of Chuvalo Sparked Ice Bag Mystery" is something of an unintentional red herring, as the so-called "ice bag mystery" was secondary to the fact that cover subject Joe Frazier had just taken over the number-one spot in THE RING's heavyweight rankings, thanks to his fourth-round TKO of George Chuvalo. Nonetheless, Associate Editor Dan Daniel writes a piece that delves into the seemingly mundane fact that Chuvalo's corner crew held an ice bag to the Canadian's solar plexus between rounds. Chuvalo's manager, Irving Ungerman, succinctly sums up the situation when he says, "Yes, we did have an ice bag on Chuvalo's solar plexus, but no great significance attaches to it now, nor did it mean anything during the fight."

World Champions

(for period ended August 15, 1967)
Heavyweight: Cassius Clay
Light Heavyweight: Dick Tiger
Middleweight: Nino Benvenuti
Welterweight: Curtis Cokes
Junior Welterweight: Paul Fujii
Lightweight: Carlos Ortiz
Junior Lightweight: Yoshiaki Numata
Featherweight: Vincente Saldivar
Bantamweight: Fighting Harada
Flyweight: Chartchai Chionoi

"Does The Garden Have Another Marciano?" is Daniel's coverage of the actual Frazier-Chuvalo fight in which he speculates that Frazier could become a huge attraction. "Judging from the complete way in which Joe Frazier demolished George Chuvalo in 9 minutes 16 seconds in New York's Madison Square Garden, and in view of the fact that the Canadian had gone 45 minutes, the 15-round distance, with Cassius Clay, it may be surmised that Harry Markson, boxing's director in the Gotham arena, has latched on to the next heavyweight champion of the world," wrote Daniel in a painfully lengthy sentence.

"Chionoi Reasserts Flyweight Skills, KOs Keosuriya In Three" is Editor Nat Fleischer's account of flyweight champion Chartchai Chionoi's eighth-round TKO of Puntip Keosuriya in Bangkok, Thailand.

"The huge arena, filled to capacity with 35,000, was the scene of the first world title match in the Orient in which two natives were the participants," writes Fleischer. "The police estimated that several thousand fans who jammed the adjoining streets were turned away. Although the spectators were not treated to the action they had expected, they went home well satisfied. A power right to the chin, following a short exchange, put an end to the contest."

Thailand's King Bhumiphol attended the fight and presented Chionoi and former flyweight champion Pone Kingpetch with RING championship belt that Fleischer had bought with him.

"As further evidence of his interest in boxing, His Majesty honored THE RING Editor with a private audience at the palace, the first given to a non-diplomat."

"Suh Kang Il Snaps Mando Ramos' Win String At 17" is California correspondent Don Fraser's report on Kang Il's upset of the previously unbeaten Ramos in front of a sellout crowd of 10,202 at Los Angeles' Olympic Auditorium.

"Ramos admitted that he blew it by not throwing enough jabs," writes Fraser. "The Korean, making his first start in the USA, was strong and had little trouble scoring with his

Fleischer looks on as Chionoi gets his RING belt from King Bhumiphol

right hands to Ramos' head."

When Fraser asked Ramos what he had learned, the future lightweight champion, replied, "I learned how to lose."

"Richardson Quits, Becomes Teacher" by Frank Allnutt announces the retirement of British Empire and Canadian middleweight champion Blair Richardson, 26, who was to become a faculty member at Emerson College in Boston.

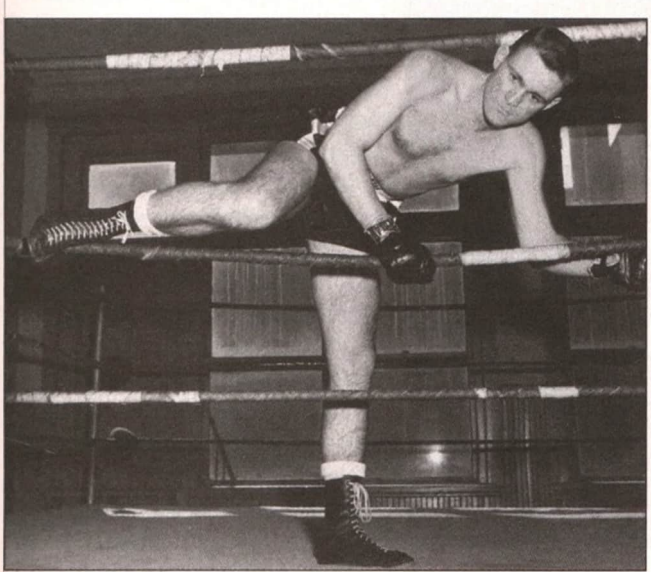
Richardson, a native of Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he fought most of his bouts, tallied a 45-5-2 (36) record between July 1956 and July '66. Although he beat some pretty good fighters, including Gomeo Brennan and Joe DeNucci, Richardson never fought for the world title.

"Napoles Stops Morgan In Tijuana Bull Ring" by Tays Cool documents Joes Napoles' second-round stoppage of L.C. Morgan in front of a capacity crowd of 16,000 (another 3,000 were turned away). Morgan held a cut-eye TKO win over Napoles, but the Cuban prevailed in spectacular fashion in the rematch.

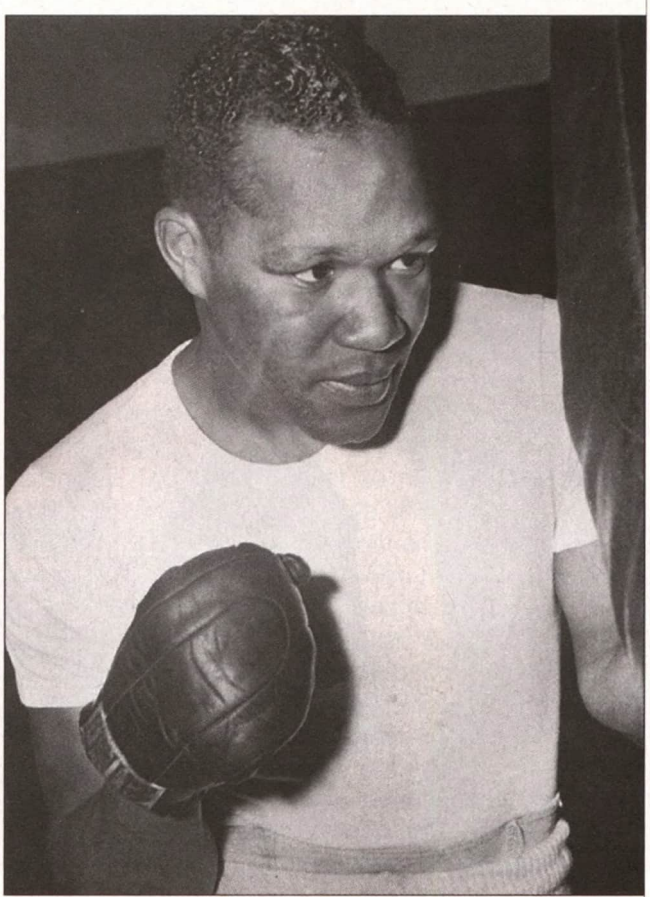
Napoles, who was still campaigning as a junior welter, floored Morgan twice in the second round, the second time for keeps. Less than two years later, Napoles stopped Curtis Cokes in the 13th round to win the welterweight championship. He was enshrined in the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1990.

"Pittsburgh's Newest Hope: Jack Rodgers" Undefeated in 23 pro starts, including a recent points win over Joey Giardello, Rodgers seemed worthy of Frank Dascenzo's glowing profile. But Rodgers lost a rematch to future middleweight champion Giardello shortly after this issue went on sale and never won another fight, retiring in July 1970.

"Seen And Heard" by Jersey Jones announces the tragic death of former welterweight and middleweight contender Holman Williams, who was killed when the Akron, Ohio, gym where he lived caught fire while he was asleep. Williams was 52 at the time of his death. ■



Canadian Richardson quits boxing to become college teacher



Williams died in gym fire

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

A Novel Approach To Improving Boxing Safety

As things stand, there remains no federal regulation of boxing and little hope for the future. Senator John McCain, the lone congressional champion for the sport is preoccupied with his presidential bid. Sadly, many of his major campaign contributors vehemently oppose the formation of an overseeing body. For example, the MGM Mirage, listed as a major contributor to McCain's current campaign, contributed $70,400, and Nevada State Athletic Commission Chairman John Bailey gave McCain $2,300 in 2007. Therefore, even if McCain were to succeed this November, it is unlikely there will be changes in boxing reform.

Currently, there is haphazard enforcement of the Boxing Safety Act, no uniformity in medical requirements for licensure, and ringside care fluctuates from excellent to inadequate depending on where a fight is held.

It is a reasonable assumption that commissions are the best equipped to educate fighters regarding safety. Boxing, however, is an international sport and fighters travel from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. As a result, a commission's contact with a fighter is limited to the weigh-in, fight, and post-fight evaluation. This virtually eliminates continuity of care. Sometimes it appears we can better protect our boxers by throwing up our hands, closing one eye, and praying.

Nonetheless, I contend that instead of complaining about what we don't have and continually using it as an excuse, we should focus on a cost-effective solution that lies directly in front of us. Recently, the Ultimate Fighting Championship held a mandatory daylong seminar for its fighters, covering topics ranging from prohibited substances to making weight, dehydration, concussion, and finances.

Why aren't boxing promotional companies doing the same and looking out for the wellbeing of the sport? The answer is twofold: They are not legally required to do so and it is simpler to defer to a fighter's trainer. This is another way boxing shoots itself in the foot and continues to live in the past.

When Jose Luis Castillo failed to make weight for his March 8 super lightweight WBC eliminator bout, everyone involved seemed astonished that this could happen *again*. Guess the $250,000 fine he received from the Nevada State Athletic Commission in June 2006 for the same infraction wasn't a enough of a deterrent. Pardon my sarcasm, but if Castillo and countless others had knowledgeable individuals to assist them with nutrition and making weight, these fiascos would be far less frequent.

Promotional companies need to understand they will have more competitive fights and increased longevity of their athletes if they expand their role. Moreover, the lack of such involvement has helped relegate boxing to a niche sport. This need not be a great expense or an imposition for the fighters. It is a way to offer boxers a resource that other professional organizations, such as the NFL, NHL, and NBA, have had in place for decades. The UFC understands this; why doesn't the boxing industry?

PHOTO BY RICK GUZMAN

Could Castillo's latest weigh-in woes have been prevented?

Several boxing companies do use medical personnel in an advisory capacity, but typically it is to administer illegal intravenous fluids in a fighter's room following a tough weigh-in, inject a fighter's injured hands too close to fight time, or stitch up cuts in the dressing room to avoid costly hospital bills.

Promoters need to enlist a legitimate physician liaison to

interface with commissions regarding needed medical requirements and any medical issues that arise regarding their fighters. The physician can individually advise fighters regarding symptoms or complaints that occurred during training or a bout. Fighters and trainers could discuss supplements, medications, conditioning, and acclimatization.

A promotional company's medical advisor could also host conferences with written material for fighters, trainers, and cutmen regarding weight loss, dehydration, safe training regimens, concussion, medical suspensions, handling hand injuries, and improved handling of cuts, nosebleeds, and facial swelling between rounds.

In 2000, Main Events held a series of seminars modeled after those held by the NBA to assist fighters in dealing with the media and handling their finances. Pat English, legal counsel for Main Events, noted that most fighters didn't wish to attend.

"Robbie Peden was one of the few who attended and he wasn't even a Main Events fighter! It was disheartening they showed so little interest," said English.

I, on the other hand, have found that boxers do care about their health and wellbeing, but need access to experts. This becomes even more important depending on where a fighter is competing. Most commissions do not require brain scans or neurological exams. Even when performed, they are often too infrequent to reflect recent injury.

Evander Holyfield rightly contends he has been medically tested more than any other fighter. It is partially because he has personally subjected himself to serial MRI scans. Few athletes have the means to be so thorough, but promoters should take a lesson from Holyfield.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Promoter DiBella (with Paul Malignaggi) advocates strong medical oversight

Lou DiBella, president of DiBella Entertainment, believes a promoter should have his fighters reexamined when necessary and use a rule of reason.

"You can't always count on what an MRI shows. If you hear a cadence change [in a fighter's speech] or if you see a fighter showing concussive symptoms, you know there is something seriously wrong. A negative CT doesn't mean much. There is formal and informal cognitive testing," said DiBella.

DiBella, however, believes the promoter is not best equipped to deal with these issues, but admits his contracts give him the right to have a fighter tested when he deems necessary. "I have the ability to get out even if the commission has found no medical issue," DiBella explained. "I have released fighters that have gone on to fight for others because I felt they were at risk."

Many promoters will not admit when an individual is in trouble, and instead opt to venue shop to avoid a license denial. If this were not true, Joe Mesi wouldn't be fighting in Rhode Island and Tommy Morrison would not have recently appeared on a Top Rank card in Mexico.

DiBella refers to the death of Brad Rone as an example of what is wrong with boxing. In 2003, Rone collapsed in Utah after 27 straight losses. "The fact that Brad Rone fought in Utah is an indictment of the sport," said DiBella.

English believes that a promotional company should be involved in safety issues when a fight is held under unsophisticated regulations. "When we held Lewis-Tyson in Tennessee, we brought in Nevada officials to assist. This included a former ringside physician and inspectors," said English. "When you go overseas, you need to make sure the minimum standards are adhered to. We establish the quickest way to get to a trauma center. This was something we did when Rahman-Lewis was held in South Africa. We did the same thing when we held fights in Poland."

Yes, financial success is the bottom line, but a promoter needs to recognize boxing as a sports industry, not their personal fiefdom. They can give fighters the respect they deserve and improve their business through the use of savvy medical experts. With little effort, fighters will learn how they can win bouts *and* lead a healthy life. ■

By Jim Bagg

You Don't Want To Get On My Bagg Side

Over the years, the Baggmeister has frequently been accused of being a crusty, old man who complains about everything and takes potshots at everyone. However, since Baggrack Obagga became a monthly columnist for THE RING last year, a couple of his readers have dared to suggest that he's grown soft. They've implied that getting long overdue space on the pages of "The Bible Of Boxing" is the equivalent of sleeping in silk pajamas, and that the Bagg-o-matic isn't taking his job as industry watchdog, ready to bite intruders in the family jewels, seriously enough.

Well, if a Bagg rant is what you want, a Bagg rant is what you'll get. There are plenty of people and entities ticking off the Baggarooney these days, so here goes with a list of the top nine people and things drawing the ire of the fight game's greatest columnist. (Why nine and not 10? Because everybody and their baby momma does top-10 lists, and the Baggster is an American original. So it was between a "top nine" and a "top 11," and frankly, you sniveling worms aren't worthy of two extra Bagg rants.)

1. Jose Sulaiman: Shouldn't every list of people damaging boxing start with the WBC dictator? Here's his latest act of atrocity: When world middleweight champion (and WBC beltholder) Kelly Pavlik fought an over-the-weight, non-title bout against Jermain Taylor in February, Sulaiman and his fellow slugs still charged Pavlik $25,000, despite their belt not being on the line. It couldn't possibly be categorized as a "sanctioning fee," since they weren't really sanctioning anything. So what would you call it? The Baggalini's no expert in this area, but making a fighter pay

PHOTO BY RONALDO SCHEMIDT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Sulaiman, pictured with Don King in Mexico City, has 25,000 new reasons to laugh

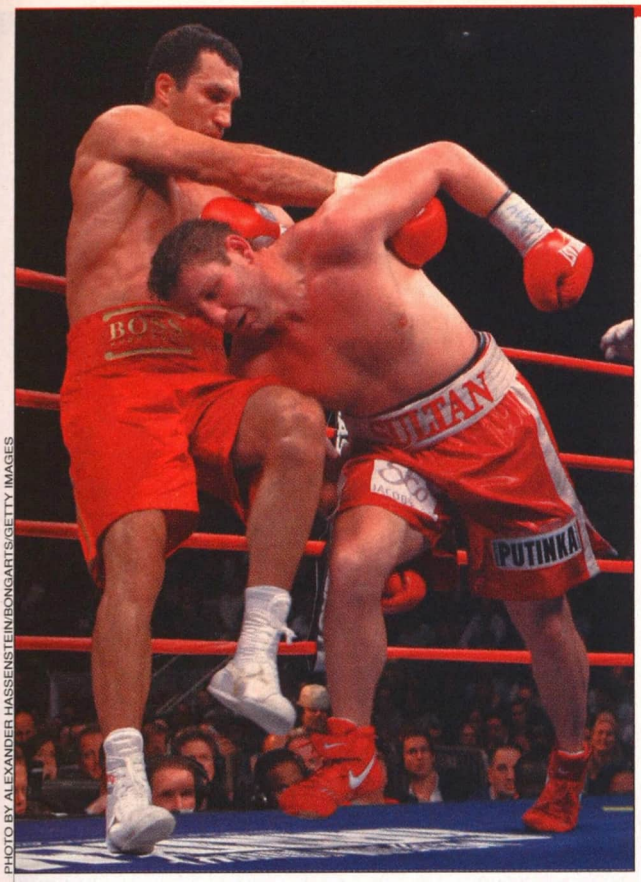


PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Klitschko and Ibragimov fumble their way through heavyweight farce

you 25-large if he wants to keep your belt sounds a little bit like extortion, doesn't it?

If there were any justice in this world, Ed Brophy and the rest of the crew at the International Boxing Hall of Fame would charge Sulaiman a sanctioning fee in exchange for their keeping his plaque on the wall. $10,000 a week seems like a fair price. Make him pay it, or else he gets stripped of his Hall of Fame status. Could there possibly be a more fitting punishment?

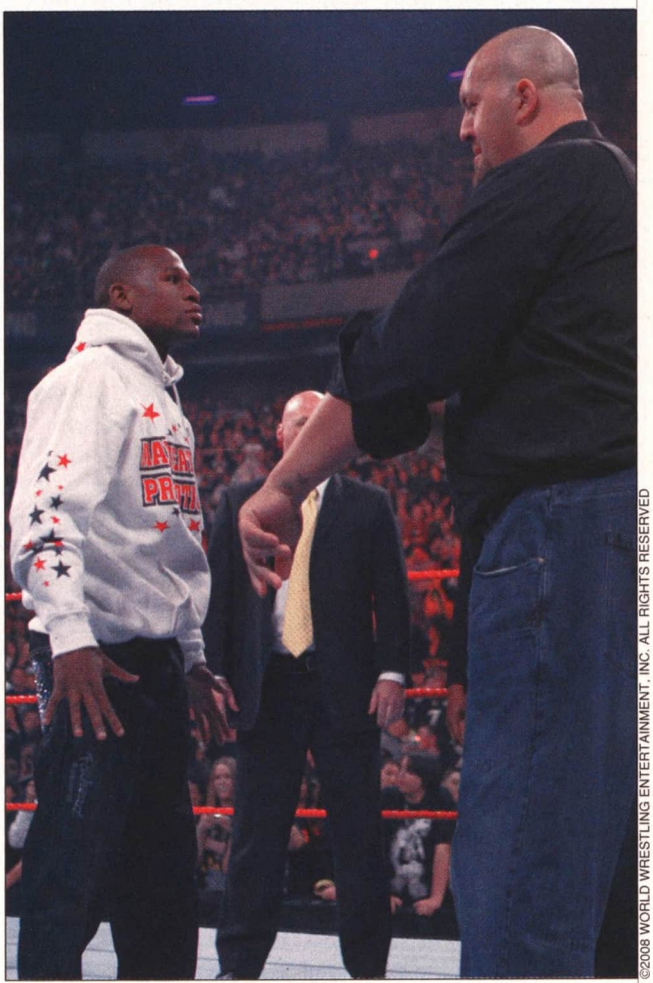
2. Safety-first heavyweights: Baggtros-Baggtros Ghali isn't going to name names, but let's just say, hypothetically, that the best heavyweight in the world got a chance to unify belts at Madison Square Garden in front of a massive HBO audience, and he totally stunk out the joint. Given the importance of the heavyweight division in impacting the mainstream's opinion of boxing, one could argue that such a travesty would be the largest single-night step back the fight game has taken since the reading of the scorecards in Lennox Lewis-Evander Holyfield I (also a unification fight at MSG).

Wladimir Klitschko and Sultan Ibragimov, you guys have no idea how lucky you are the Bagglin' Oat Bran isn't naming names.

3. Doug Tucker: Unless Jenna Jameson was, ahem, *distracting* Tucker from under the ring apron, there is no conceivable excuse for how this Nevada judge scored the Cristian Mijares-Jose Navarro fight 120-108 for Navarro. Reasonable observers had Mijares winning between seven and 10 rounds out of 12. But somehow Tucker had him winning ... let's see, carry the one ... *zero rounds!* How can any human being possibly believe the guy who got outboxed in the majority of the rounds, who was gushing blood from his nose from round two on, won every single round? You sure you don't want to sprinkle in a few 10-8 rounds, Mother-Tucker? Add to this the fact that Tucker only gave Marco Antonio Barrera two rounds against Juan Manuel Marquez last March, and you have yourself an individual who should be legally required to maintain a minimum distance of 50 yards from the nearest pencil at all times.

4. Keith Kizer: Tucker is only half of the problem in Nevada; the other half is a commish who won't let his judges or referees speak to the media, and who publicly supported Tucker's scoring of the Mijares-Navarro fight, telling reporters there was nothing unreasonable about the scorecard. Nothing unreasonable about a card so ludicrous that many observers speculated afterward that Tucker had the corners mixed up? You're not fooling anyone, Kizer. And you're making Marc Ratner look like a god.

5. Gary Shaw: Nothing against Shaw as a boxing promoter. He's no shadier than anyone else, and he's helped make some great fights happen. But to Gary Shaw



Bagg thinks a Mayweather-Cotto fight would be a bigger show

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The Monthly Mailbagg

Ever since the Baggman opened this Yahoo e-mail account, he's received quite a lot of information about Viagra, penis enlargements, and girls who are lonely and looking for someone to talk to. Here are a couple of e-mails that had nothing to do with any of the above topics:

Hi Jim,

Where have you been all my life? Your columns in THE RING are the most refreshing, knowledgeable, and entertaining pieces of writing about the Sweet Science I've read in years. I'm an old head who recalls with fondness buying THE RING with bad artwork on the covers and rushing home on Friday nights to listen to the fights coming mostly from the Garden with Don Dunphy.

I agree with you about *The Contender* TV show and its fighters. First of all, who gives a crap about reality shows, and the same for second-rate fighters posing as real contenders. The show is so orchestrated and hyped, it's more show business than sport. But let's face it, the masses are morons. They'll buy anything. Remember Richard Nixon?

Keep up the great writing,

Joe Thompson

Joe,

Your talk of RING covers with bad artwork and the sweet sounds of Dunphy brings the Baggaphiliac back to a simpler, happier time. As thanks for conjuring up those wonderful memories, the Bagginator will answer your two questions.

First, in response to "Where have you been all my life?" Buried on the pages of *World Boxing*. Send your long overdue letters of complaint to Nigel "The Man" Collins for insisting on keeping a good writer down.

Second, in response to "Remember Richard Nixon?" You've just undone all the good you did reminding the Baggpipe of Don Dunphy and old RING covers. Thanks for nothing.

Jim,

Who do you think won the Marquez vs. Vazquez III fight? I had Marquez winning 144-111. I have no doubt Vazquez would have knocked him out had he used some of that 12th round aggression sooner, but nonetheless, he didn't. Just curious on your thoughts.

Tyler Crosby

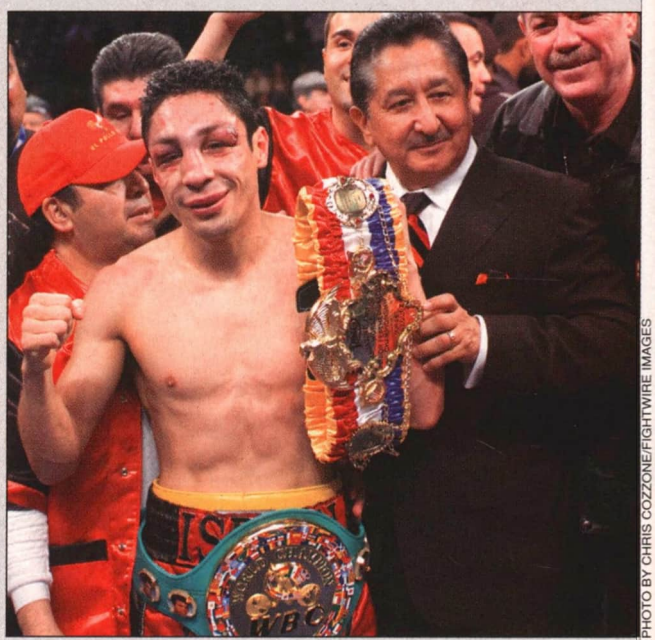

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Bagg had Vazquez winning by a point

Tyler,

Whoa, 144-111, huh? Someone's getting a bit liberal with the 10-point must system. The Baggician hasn't seen a scorecard that wacky since ... let's see, when was the last time a Harold Lederman card appeared onscreen?

If you must know, from his seat stuck to the soda stain on his couch, the Baggalooloo had Vazquez pulling it out by a point. (That's 113-112. Not 143-142. Or 671-670. Or 37,412-37,411.)

the mixed martial arts promoter, on behalf of the sport of boxing, the Bagg Lunch thanks you for stabbing the Sweet Science in the back and working out a deal for CBS to televise MMA. Way to go, way to give that expensive diamond necklace to your hot 22-year-old mistress-of-the-moment while the wife who supported you through thick and thin gets nothing. (Note to the idiots out there: That's a metaphor. The Baggtastic is not accusing Shaw of cheating on his wife. At the very least, he clearly loves her cooking.)

6. HBO and Showtime's advertising divisions: On the evening of Saturday, March 8, the two pay-cable networks each imparted upon their viewers a shameful flat-out lie. On Showtime, during an ad for the Antonio Tarver-Clinton Woods and Chad Dawson-Glen Johnson April 12 doubleheader, the voiceover dubbed it a night featuring "the four best light heavyweights in the world." Someone had better inform Ken Hershman and the rest of the gang at Showtime that there's a guy named Bernard Hopkins who kinda sorta dominated the crap out of Tarver less than two years ago and is recognized by everyone with a brain larger than a chickpea as the 175-pound champion.

Sadly, HBO is just as guilty of false advertising, and, unlike Showtime, their lie didn't even make sense in terms of helping to hype the fight coming up. During the "Countdown" infomercial in advance of Manny Pacquiao-

Juan Manuel Marquez II, the narrator said that going into Pacquiao-Marquez I, Marquez was "the featherweight champion" and Pacquiao was "the challenger." You mean the same Pacquiao who had just beaten Barrera for the linear championship of the world was the challenger to Marquez, the guy who had won a vacant belt against Manuel Medina and another belt against Derrick Gainer? You have to wonder if Ross Greenburg and his underlings get together for weekly meetings to brainstorm ways to insult the intelligence of their viewers.

7. Jose Luis Castillo: It's easy to blame the former lightweight champ's handlers for trying to force him to keep making unnatural weights, but at a certain point, you have to shift the blame onto the fighter. He's the one who knows his body best. He knows when a certain weight is unattainably low. And when he keeps signing for fights at limits he can't come within four pounds of, then shame on him.

Obviously, his repeated failure to make weight has hit Castillo pretty hard in the wallet, but it's also going to hit him hard five years after his career is over. Following his loss to Diego Corrales in their all-time classic first encounter in '05, Castillo had a very reasonable shot at the Hall of Fame. Now, though, he'll be remembered as much for his failure to make weight as anything (this makes three fights he's fouled up, two of which had to be canceled). His chances of getting voted into Canastota are now about as good as the Baggelosity's chances of being given the Fleischer Award by all the jealous newspaper writers who refuse to honor those who are more talented than them.

8. Vince McMahon: On the one hand, you have to give McMahon credit for getting his latest WrestleMania extravaganza extra press by involving Floyd Mayweather. But on the other hand, he's fueling Mayweather's egomaniacal belief that he's a mainstream super-duper-star with nothing left to prove, which means he's helping convince Mayweather never to fight deserving contenders like Miguel Cotto. Mayweather vs. The Big Show is a perfectly fun little diversion, but The Bagg Show hopes it doesn't lead "Pretty Boy" to price himself out of every boxing match where Oscar De La Hoya isn't in the opposite corner.

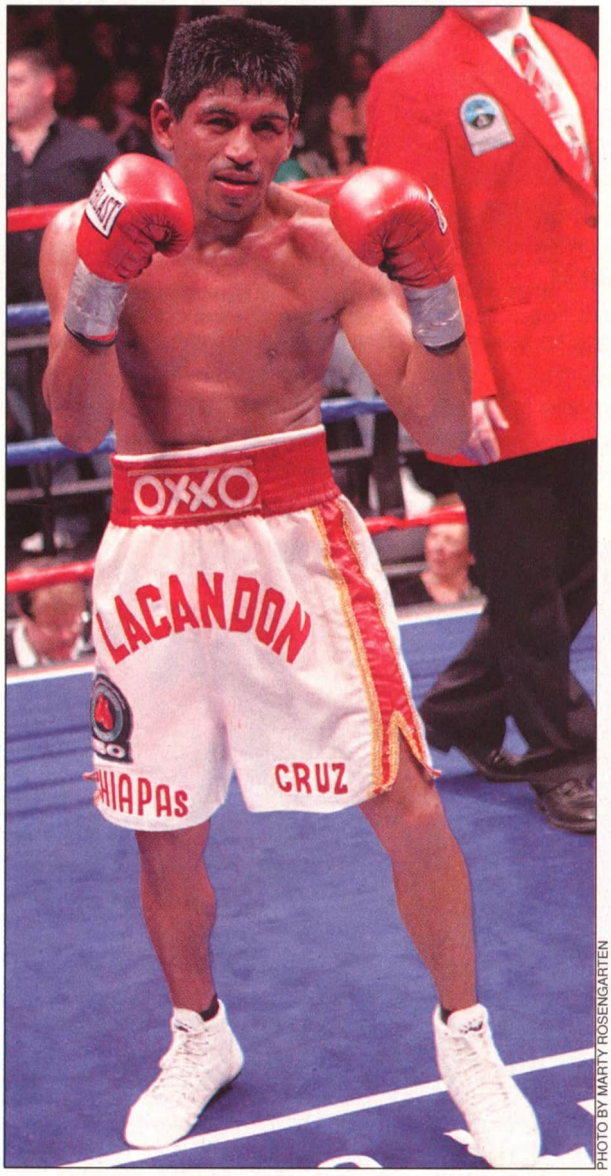

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Cruz threw 1,580 punches en route to upset and Stingray

9. Jim Gray: Some microphone-holding dweebs never learn. Hey, Jimbo, remember when Kostya Tszyu scolded you and told you, "Please do not be rude"? When a fighter like Israel Vazquez, who's just gone 12 brain-rattling rounds against Rafael Marquez, wants to answer your questions in his native tongue, does it ever cross your mind that it might be mildly rude to keep insisting that he answer in English? And heaven forbid you stop to consider the interest of the Showtime subscribers, who'd rather hear a well-articulated Spanish answer translated into English than a generic two-word English answer from a guy with six English phrases in his vocabulary.

And The Stingray Goes To ...

Cristobal Cruz, one of the many badass Mexicans who turned pro before he could grow chest hair, has had his ups and downs, and is infinitely better than his record suggests. Facing Thomas Mashaba in the South African featherweight contender's U.S. debut in March, Cruz, who came in with an ugly record of 35-11-1 (23), flapped his wings like a hummingbird in a fight he wasn't supposed to win, throwing an insane 1,580 punches. That hyperactivity helped him pull out an upset majority decision win over "The Rock," who had just one loss in 25 fights entering the bout.

Teddy Atlas may disagree—the ESPN analyst insisted on focusing solely on what Mashaba was doing even though Cruz was outthrowing and outlanding him in every round—but this was a classic Stingray-worthy performance. Cruz was the ultimate determined underdog, and Teddy's score of 117-112 for Mashaba was a slap in the face. Fortunately, Cruz got in the final Sting. ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com.

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

One More Time

I understand if Juan Manuel Marquez feels he won, but 114-113 for Manny Pacquiao is the correct score. I was at the fight and watched it on tape several times, and I keep coming up with the same score: six rounds apiece. The knockdown by "Pac-Man" was the difference in the fight.

If Marquez has a problem with the judges, he should stop getting knocked down and instead put Manny on his butt. Pacquiao has now stood over Marquez four times. I think some people gave Marquez rounds just for staying on his feet. The decision was correct! Now let' do it again!

VICTOR RIVERA
vicrivera@yahoo.com

The Greatest Sport

Kelly Pavlik, who is one of the most exciting fighters in the world, fighting Jermain Taylor, who is so talented and determined, made for an amazing rematch. Fights like this show why boxing is the greatest sport in the world!

EDMUND WHITTINGTON
Seattle, WA

Tedious Teddy

ESPN2's boxing coverage must be driving away fans by the boatload. Not only are the matchups pathetic, trying to listen to Teddy Atlas drone on for two hours is unbearable even for hardcore fans. Hearing his broken record collection of lines, along with his negative, no-fun approach makes me realize why all the fighters he trained turned into nut jobs. Someone needs to remind this guy it's supposed to be entertainment for viewers. He makes it more miserable than a hot day in Gleason's Gym. Call me when Atlas is gone. Then at least I can watch crappy fights with the sound on again. Meanwhile, I'll keep reading the best boxing magazine out there, the one and only RING magazine.

RORY STEELE
steelerory@yahoo.com

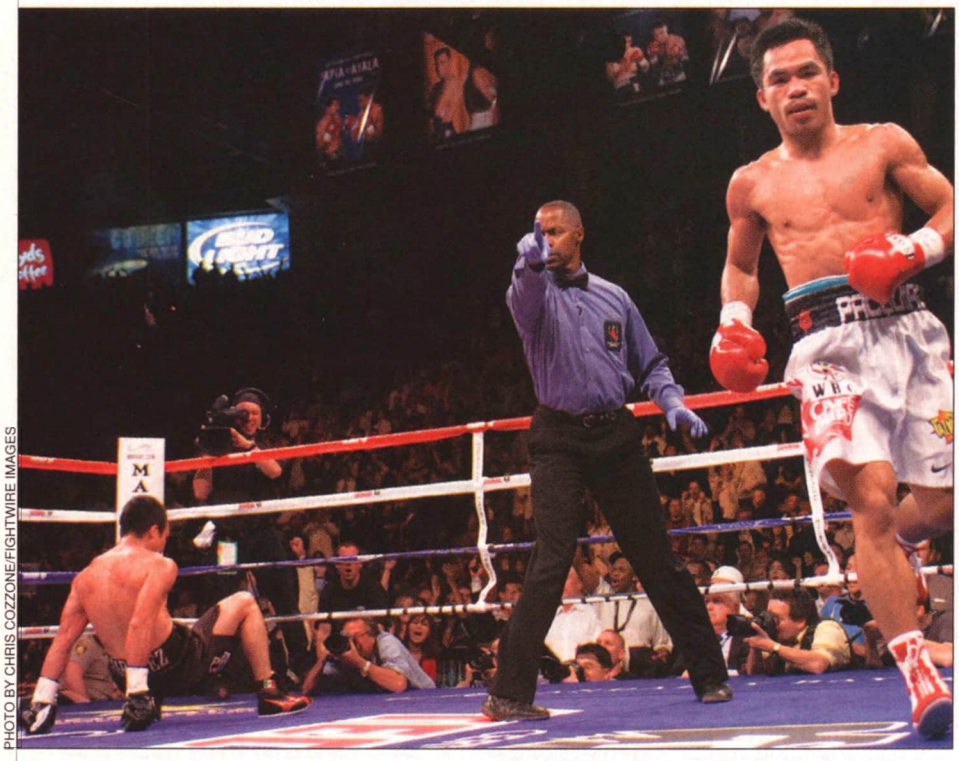

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Referee Kenny Bayless directs Manny Pacquiao to a neutral corner after the Filipino floored Juan Manuel Marquez in the third round of their rematch. Reader Victor Rivera thinks Marquez should stop complaining about the decision and instead try to stay on his feet if they fight a third time.

True Sportsmanship

I recently attended the Robert Guerrero-Jason Litzau fight, and have to say boxing is a lot more exciting in person than it is on TV. Both guys put on a great show. Most of the crowd was there to see "The Ghost" and booed Litzau when he came into the arena. It seemed that my brother and I were the only ones rooting for Litzau.

After the fight, my brother managed to sneak into Litzau's dressing room, where he met almost everyone. He told me Jason was very upset and felt like he had no fans, so my brother told him we were rooting for him. Guerrero also came

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

THE RING received more letters and e-mails about the amazing Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez rubber match than any other topic this issue. Among the readers who wrote in praise of the fight were Jerry Cornelius and Ryan Williams. Reader Ramiro Ortiz also loved the fight, but hated Jim Gray's postfight interviews.

to Litzau's dressing room, and the two fighters talked like they were old buddies. That's true sportsmanship. Although Litzau lost, he should know that my brother and I will always be his fans.

ALBERT GUTIERREZ
Visalia, CA

What It's Really All About

Floyd Mayweather and Wladimir Klitschko should be ashamed of themselves for pretending to be real fighters. After watching Israel Vazquez and Rafael Marquez put on an all-time classic, Floyd and Wladimir should feel embarrassed for competing in the same sport as those two warriors. Mayweather danced and ran his way to a controversial win over Oscar De La Hoya. Klitschko was so scared of getting knocked out by Sultan Ibragimov, he never attempted to step it up and take out Ibragimov the way a true heavyweight champion should.

Mayweather the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world? Yeah, right! Vazquez and Marquez showed us what pound-for-pound is really about. Thank you, guys, for one hell of a trilogy.

JERRY CORNELIUS
bottle_rocketjc@yahoo.com

After watching the third Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez fight, I remembered what boxing used to be like when fighters actually fought to win. Vazquez and Marquez were so perfectly matched that I hated to see either of them lose. Hats off to Vazquez, who fought through the cuts and the swelling to bring it to Marquez in the final rounds and win the fight. And hats off to Marquez, who refused to fall—but did hold on to the top rope to keep from doing so.

Here's a big "thank you" to Vazquez and Marquez for the great trilogy. I think everyone would agree that they both deserve an easy fight next.

RYAN WILLIAMS
Louisville, KY

Gray Ruined Showtime Spectacular

On March 1, I witnessed one of the all-time great fights: Israel Vazquez vs. Rafael Marquez III. It exceeded everybody's expectations. Afterward, I sat back and reflected on the great job Al Bernstein and Steve Albert had done, keeping us updated on the many ebbs and flows of the fight without making themselves intrusive. I also admired the professional job Pat Russell had done as the referee, when he correctly ruled a knockdown in round 12 when Marquez was sent sprawling into the ropes. The good feeling, however, came to an abrupt end when Jim Gray entered the ring.

The proud winner, Vazquez, smiled through a swollen nose and nasty gashes over both eyes, expecting to tell the viewers about his great victory. Instead, Gray dished him aside, and in his usual search for controversy, went straight to the defeated Marquez to ask about the "standing count." The focus had quickly shifted from the two glorious warriors to a referee who absolutely had made the correct call.

It's amazing to me that Showtime allows this nonsense. Gray disrespected the sport when it should have been a great moment. He disrespected the two warriors, who had given their all in the ring. He disrespected Russell, who turned in a thoroughly professional performance. Above all, he disrespected his employer, Showtime, by not taking the time to properly understand the rules of the sport.

RAMIRO ORTIZ
Miami, FL

Is Haye The Answer?

After suffering through the game of patty-cake between Wladimir Klitschko and Sultan Ibragimov and the sloppy tough man contest between Samuel Peter and Oleg Maskaev, I am going to have to change the channel when heavyweights are fighting. If this is the best the heavyweight division has to offer, it wouldn't matter if Popeye was the unified champion. How is it possible that we don't have one quality heavyweight? Maybe David Haye can bring some excitement back to the division.

J.J. GUERRIERI
Cleveland, OH ■

By Joseph Santoliquito

Pavlik Not Underestimating Lockett

Everyone needs a break every once in a while, even world champions. But **Kelly Pavlik** isn't looking at his first middleweight world championship defense, against **Gary Lockett**, on June 7 at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City, as a walkover.

"No, I'm not," Pavlik said emphatically, just before boarding a plane to kickoff his press conference tour to promote the Lockett fight, which will be televised on HBO. "People think I am getting a break by taking on Lockett. That's what people are saying, at least. But I know Lockett a little bit, and he comes to fight. Me and my team are definitely taking him seriously."

Pavlik, 33-0 (29), is coming off a three-fight docket in which he stopped **Edison Miranda** and **Jermain Taylor** to win the world middleweight championship in September, and then decisioned Taylor in a rematch at a 164-pound catchweight in February. Miranda and Taylor have a combined record of 57-4-1 (43)—Pavlik being responsible for three of those four losses. Lockett comes into the fight 30-1 (21).

"I'm looking forward to it," Pavlik said. "I'm going to train for this like it was Taylor, or Miranda, or anyone. What I like most is that we're looking at Atlantic City, where we got a great turnout the last time from Youngstown. We're expecting that again. I can't let them down."

Pavlik said he has watched some films of Lockett and has a good idea of what to expect.

"Lockett comes to fight," he said. "He likes to control the action and back guys up. He hits pretty hard with his record the way it is, with some questionable guys in there. We'll see if he can do that against me. But I do like the fact a lot of people already expect me to win. It is great to get that kind of respect, because it's something that I didn't get too much of two years ago.

"A lot of hard work, a lot of blood and sweat went into getting the respect I think I have today. It's hard work that got me here and hard work that's going to keep me here. Lockett is going to get a full portion of me. The other thing I like is that Lockett is running his mouth already. I like it when people run their mouths about me. It's one of the things I was a little turned off by in the Taylor rematch. Jermain didn't say anything. This guy is starting to shoot off his mouth and that makes me happy. You get a little worried when fighters don't talk before fights."

Pavlik will conduct a six-week training camp in Youngstown. He was walking around at 173 two months before the fight, but he said he should be in shape entering training camp, because "I like to start in shape in training camp, not train to get in shape."

"Kelly hasn't let any of the outside stuff bother him, he's the same old Kelly," said Mike Pavlik, Kelly's father. "He'll work in Youngstown and not pay attention to anything around him. He just goes to work."

Listen Up

May looks like an outstanding month for boxing, climaxing with the May 31 **Shane Mosley-Zab Judah** welterweight showdown, on HBO Pay-Per-View ... On the same night, WBA heavyweight titlist **Ruslan Chagaev** will face **Nicolay Valuev** in a rematch, in Oberhausen, Germany ... A week before Mosley-Judah and Chagaev-Valuev is the comeback of junior welterweight world champion **Ricky Hatton**, who will have his first fight after his loss to world welterweight champion **Floyd Mayweather**. Hatton will face **Juan Lazcano** in Manchester, England, on a card that also includes IBF 140-pound titleholder **Paul Malignaggi**'s rematch with **Lovemore Ndou**. The May 24 card will be televised by Versus in the U.S. ... A May 2 card features U.S. Olympian **Andre Dirrell** in his biggest challenge to date, against **Anthony Hanshaw**, in a super middleweight fight on Showtime from Santa Ynez, California ... And rising junior middleweight **James Kirkland** gets his first big-time exposure, on HBO's *Boxing After Dark*, against **Eromosele Albert**, from Miami, Florida, on May 17. ■

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Wales' Gary Lockett (right) attacks Ryan Rhodes in 2006 en route to a 12-round decision. Lockett will now challenge middleweight champ Kelly Pavlik on June 7 in Atlantic City. The scheduled 12-rounder will be Pavlik's first title defense.

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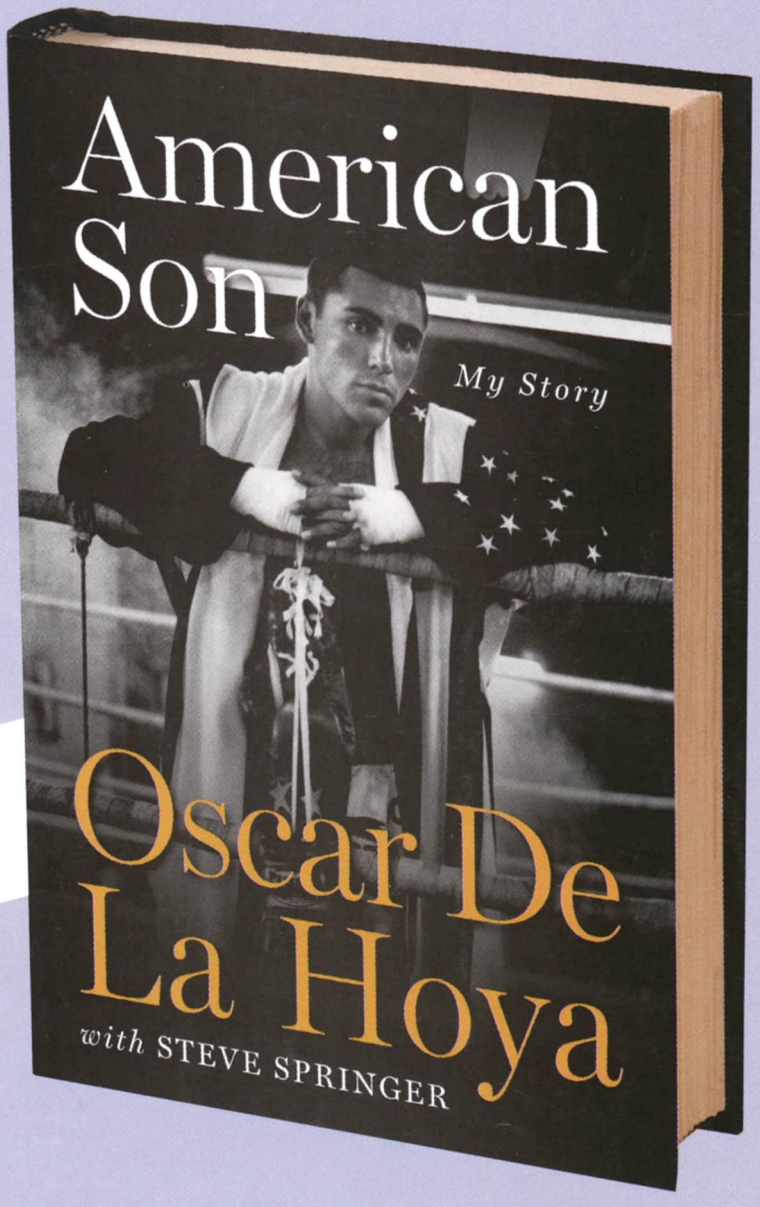

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